

Ruan Yuan, 1764-1849

The Life and Work of a Major Scholar-Official in
Nineteenth-Century China before the Opium War

Betty Peh-T'i Wei

新開園



Ruan Yuan, 1764-1849

In loving memory, this book is dedicated

to my parents

Hsioh-ren Wei (1899–1987)

Yingbao Liu Wei (1904–91)

and

to my pal ‘Der Alte Fritz’ (Frederick Wade Mote, 1922–2005)

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"At first glance, Square Word Calligraphy appears to be nothing more unusual than Chinese characters, but in fact it is a new way of rendering English words in the format of a square so they resemble Chinese characters. Chinese viewers expect to be able to read Square Word Calligraphy but cannot. Western viewers, however are surprised to find they can read it. Delight erupts when meaning is unexpectedly revealed."

— Britta Erickson, *The Art of Xu Bing*

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Thirty years have elapsed since I first began this project. It was a hot summer day in 1976 when I called on Beatrice Bartlett, renowned authority on Qing documents, at that time conducting research in the newly opened Qing Archives at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. I had moved to Hong Kong after years in the United States where I attended Chapin, Bryn Mawr and New York University, absorbed in a world of Western learning, and had not utilized my Chinese background at all. Betsy convinced me to become involved in mid-Qing research. I was wallowing in the nineteenth century in any case, mainly on Europe and the United States. What Betsy wanted was for me to use the Qing Archives to expand my horizon as a historian to include China of the nineteenth century. We decided that I should pursue a doctorate at the University of Hong Kong, which follows the British system, so that I could focus on thesis work from the outset. Betsy suggested Ruan Yuan, whose name had been mentioned to her by the late Professor Mary C. Wright of Yale years ago.

I decided to undertake a biographical study principally because I liked people, and, in theory at least, presumably since I was passing the ‘first flush of youth’, I could approach the subject with more compassion and insight. There was yet no book-length study on a major scholar-official of the early nineteenth century before the Opium War making extensive use of extant archival documents. So I began to search for such an individual.

I had requirements. The individual on whom I was to expend time and energy had to meet certain criteria. As one major reason for this venture was to use the archival documents, I had to select someone whose position was high enough for him to enjoy the right to memorialize the throne. This person should also have left sufficient literary remains for me to see him away from his correspondence with the emperor and from the bureaucratic language that pervaded official documents. I wanted to work in the era before the Opium War, before Western influences began to intrude into Chinese traditions and values, not withstanding of course, what the Jesuits had brought in an earlier century. I

wanted to read poetry to savour literature, and I wanted to read informal writings by his contemporaries, because I wanted to indulge in gossip. I wanted this individual to be interested in calligraphy and in ancient bronzes, and I preferred that he come from somewhere along the Yangzi. The last point was to allow me to take advantage of my command of all the dialects up and down the river — to denote any sense of humour this individual might possess, and to appreciate all the jokes there were. After much research and deliberation, I chose Ruan Yuan who appeared to suit my requirements more than adequately. Subsequent discovery that he sported a superb attitude on women and the environment was icing on an already delicious cake.

Perhaps it was fate that I should spend so long working in the Qing archives. The first time I ventured into the National Palace Museum Library in Taipei where the archives were housed, for some reason I can no longer fathom, I was carrying a bottle of whisky. This bottle I dropped, right in the middle of the Reading Room. It smashed into smithereens, spilling the content. This act of splashing golden liquid all over the place turned out to be a good omen. The Qing emperors had not enjoyed sacrifices — solid or liquid — since the Revolution that toppled the dynasty many years before. Appreciating my offering, the spirits of the emperors must have cleared the way for me to read their records.

The scholars at the Museum were generous with their facilities, including the Library, the Archives, the Rare Books Collection and the ‘vault’ where the Imperial Library collections were kept. They also shared their wealth of knowledge in Qing studies. Like all scholars who have worked in the Museum, I owe a debt to the late Director Chiang Fu-ts’ung*, who encouraged and promoted Qing archival research. I am grateful to the successive curators of the archives: Chang P’e-de, Wang P’u, and Wu Che-fu, who had allowed me into the inner sanctum of the Museum to peruse certain documents. Zhuang Jifa, a specialist in my era, was there to answer queries any time day and night. Further, I am beholden to Chang Lin-sheng, without whose generosity in sharing her expertise in the Classics I could not have managed to absorb my readings so readily. She also introduced me to Professor Kong Decheng, the senior member of the seventy-sixth generation of Confucius, with whom I came to share much light-hearted banter on the women in Ruan Yuan’s life.

Meanwhile, other priorities took over my life; the years passed and I am working on Ruan Yuan still. The adage ‘all good things come to those who wait’ certainly held true in my case. A friend of my parents, Professor Xu Guoliang, was in Suzhou. One of his comrades in the ‘Cow Shed’ days of the Cultural Revolution, Professor Qi Longwei, was Professor of History at the then Teacher’s

* deceased

College in Yangzhou. Professor Qi's invitations to the city gave me the chance to meet local scholars and enabled me to visit Ruan Yuan's final residence, to meet his descendants and other residents in the neighbourhood. From them I learned local traditions passed down since Ruan Yuan's time. They also took me to see sites associated with Ruan Yuan. Particularly poignant was the still extant Ruan graves at Leitang, including those of Ruan Yuan, his father and grandfather.

I am grateful to the libraries for allowing me access to their collections, especially the National Palace Museum Library and the University of Hong Kong Libraries. I would like to acknowledge the following libraries and their staff: *Beijing*, The First Historical Archives, The National Library Rare Book Collection, The Institute of Qing Historical Research of the National People's University; *Cambridge, Massachusetts*, The Harvard-Yenching Library; *Hong Kong*, The University of Hong Kong libraries, The Library of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Library of the Chinese International School, The Hong Kong Central Library, and the Library of The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts; *Leiden*, the Oriental Department at the University of Leiden Library; *London*, The Oriental Manuscripts Collection, the Map Collection, the Parliamentary Papers Collection, and the Main Collection of The British Library; *New York*, The New York Public Library; *Oxford*, The Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford Libraries; *Princeton*, The Gest Library of Princeton University; *Taipei*, The National Palace Museum Library, The National Central Library, The National Taiwan University Libraries, The Fu Ssu-nien Library of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica; *Washington DC*, The Library of Congress.

My heartfelt thanks go to the following individuals: Beatrice Bartlett, of course who was with me all the way from conceptualization to the finish, without her guidance and encouragement this work would not even have begun. Throughout the years she has supplied advice, exhortations, documents as well as scholarly studies which I, in the wilderness away from the centres of Qing studies, would have missed otherwise. L. Y. Young chaired the panel that investigated the value of my thesis, with Thomas Metzger of the University of California as External Examiner and Ho Ping-yoke, then at the University of Hong Kong, as Internal Examiner. Their comments and suggestions were most useful and much appreciated. The late Dr and Mrs Han Li-wu were especially helpful. Dr Han was Minister of Education in 1937 whose responsibilities included moving the Palace treasures and archives to safety. He was a trustee of the National Palace Museum, whose introduction opened many doors for me in Taipei.

Frederick W.* and Hsiao-lan Mote are on all my lists of very special people, by nourishing my parents, siblings, spouse, children, grandchildren, and not the

* deceased

least myself, with intellectual, emotional, and culinary delights for the past scores of years.

In addition, I would like to thank the following friends and scholars whose names I have not yet mentioned: Chan Long*, Ming Chan, Edward Chen, Cheng Congde, Stephen Cheung, Frank Ching, Lloyd Eastman*, Fang Hao*, David Faure, Sydney Fung, Kent Guy, Hu Congjing, Huang Aiping, Michael Ipsen, Beatrice Kam, Charles Kam, Taksing Kam, Mayching Kao, Philip Kuhn, T. C. Lai, Barbara Lau, Jennifer Lau, Gennie Lee, Lucille Lee, William M. S. Lee, Leng Shao-chuan, S. T. Leong*, Marion Levy Jr.*, W. K. Ling, Dimon Liu, Lo Kingman, Adam Lui, Phyllis Lusher, Marilyn McMahon, Mei Guang, Dian Murray, Susan Naquin, Rosemary Questead, Leonard Raynard*, Celia Riely, Elizabeth Sinn, So Yu-ming, Lynn Struve, Tang Zhenchang*, Emilie Thomson, Mark Thomson, Daniel Tretiak, Tu Wei-yun, Mary Turnbull, Denis Twitchett, Wang Ching-hung, Wang Junyi, Wang Siu-lun, Wang Yigong, Katherine Wetherell*, Wei Qingyuan, Kamille Wong, Joyce Wu, Wu Rui-xiu, Silas Wu, Xiao Ping, Constance Yeung, John D. Young*, Zhao Weihang, and Zhou Jiming.

I would like to thank the Centre of Asian Studies and the Department of History at the University of Hong Kong, for providing facilities as well as camaraderie throughout the years, and in particular sanctuary as I put the finishing touches to this manuscript.

I extend my gratitude to the staff at Hong Kong University Press in particular Colin Day, Publisher, and Clara Ho, editor, for creating a respectable publication from my bundles of chaos. Further, I would like to thank my good friends, Cecil Sze, for drawing the maps on the computer, and Dr Nancy Leung for diagnosing various diseases suffered by Ruan Yuan and members of his family.

Towards the end of this project when I was looking for illustrations, Patrick Connor of Martyn Gregory of London came up with wonderful pictures. His generosity and diligence led to the discovery of a heretofore unknown portrait of Ruan Yuan 'sat' when he was Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi at Canton.

My family deserves a few words. My husband, Richard M. Liu, has suffered long, and is more than generous and kind. His support has made it possible for me to indulge in the life of an independent scholar in pursuit of Ruan Yuan. Our daughter, Katharine, has edited the manuscript and made my life generally easier by taking over the running of a household. It was she who convinced me that I should become familiar with word processing. 'Learn to give up the dialling mentality of your generation,' she exhorted, and 'be not afraid to push buttons.'

* deceased

Our other daughter Phebe, now a mother of four delightful young women, at one time had set a place for Ruan Yuan at the dinner table because he was so much a part of our family life. She made the original genealogical charts. I am gratified also to the girls for their knowledge in French and their patience in helping me digest the sources in that language.

My final thoughts, affection, and gratitude are for my parents, Hsioh-ren Wei and Yingbao Liu Wei and for Fritz Mote, my friend since 1946.

This book is dedicated in their memory.

Betty Wei

Hong Kong, January 2006

Chronology of Ruan Yuan's Government Appointments

Office	Location	Rank ¹	Appointment
Hanlin Bachelor 翰林院庶吉士	Beijing		1790
Proof Reader (Wu Ying Dian) 武英殿纂修	Beijing		1789/5
Imperial Diarist 起居注官	Beijing		1790/2
On Duty at Imperial Study 在南書房行走			
Compiler Second Class 翰林院編修	Beijing	7A	1790/3
Junior Supervisor of Instruction 詹事府少詹事	Beijing	4A	1791/3
Senior Supervisor of Instruction 詹事府正詹事	Beijing	3A	1791/11
Sub-Chancellor of Grand Secretariat 內閣學士	Beijing	2B	
On Duty at Wen Yuan Ge 文淵閣			
Director of Studies (Shandong) 山東學政	Jinan		1793/6
Director of Studies (Zhejiang) 浙江學政	Hangzhou		1795/8

1. Even before the imperial era (221 BC) Chinese civil service and personnel had been graded systematically by rank (*pin* 品). The Qing followed the Ming system in grading the offices and the officials into nine ranks, each further divided into two degrees (*deng* 等), therefore eighteen categories in total, in descending order from Rank 1A to 9B. Stipends in terms of cash (*tael* 兩 of silver) and rice (in quantity of *shi* 石) were also specified. See H. S. Brunnert and V. V. Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organizations of China* (1910), and Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (1985). For a simplified chart of the ranking system and stipends, see Immanuel Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China* (1995 edition), p. 62.

Office	Location	Rank	Appointment
Vice President (Board of Rites) 禮部侍郎			1795/9
On Duty at Imperial Study	Beijing	2A	1798–9
Vice President (Board of War) 兵部左侍郎			
On Duty at Imperial Study	Beijing	2A	1799/2
Vice President (Board of Revenue)	Beijing	2A	1799/4
戶部左侍郎			
Assistant Examiner of Metropolitan Examination 會試副考官	Beijing		1799
Acting Vice President (Board of Rites)	Beijing	2A	1799/7
禮部左侍郎管理國子監算學			
Governor of Zhejiang 浙江巡撫	Hangzhou	2B	1799–1805
Vice President (Board of Revenue)	Beijing	2A	1807
戶部左侍郎			
Vice President (Board of War) 兵部左侍郎	Beijing	2A	1807
Governor of Zhejiang 浙江巡撫	Hangzhou	2B	1807/12
Compiler 2nd Class (Hanlin Academy)	Beijing	7A	1810/10
翰林院編修			
Sub-expositor (Hanlin Academy)	Beijing	4B	1810/5
翰林院侍講			
Imperial Diarist 起居住官	Beijing		1810/10
Revisor (State Historiographer's Office)	Beijing		1810/11
國史官總輯			
Junior Supervisor of Instruction	Beijing	4A	1811/9
詹事府少詹事			
Sub-Chancellor of Grand Secretariat	Beijing	2B	1812/1
內閣學士			
Vice President (Board of Rites) 禮部左侍郎	Beijing	2A	1812/1
Vice President (Board of Works) 工部右侍郎	Beijing	2A	1812/5
Director-General of Grain Transport	Huai'an	2A	1812
漕運總督	淮安		

Office	Location	Rank	Appointment
Governor of Jiangxi 江西巡撫	Nanchang 南昌	2B	1814
Junior Guardian of the Heir Apparent 太子少保	(honorary title)		
Governor of Henan 河南巡撫	Kaifeng 開封	2B	1816/8
Governor-General of Hu Guang 湖廣總督	Wuchang 武昌	2A	1817/10
Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi ² 兩廣總督	Canton 廣州	2A	1817
Governor-General of Yunnan and Guizhou 雲貴總督	Kunming 昆明	2A	1826
Assistant Chief Examiner of Metropolitan Exam 會試副總裁	Beijing		1833
Assistant Grand Secretary 協辦大學士	Kunming	1B	1833
Grand Secretary (Tiren Ge) In Charge of Board of War 體仁閣大學士管理兵部	Beijing	1A	1835/3
Senior Vice-President of the Censorate 都察院左都御史	Beijing		1835/10
Reader, Palace Examination 殿試閱卷大臣	Beijing		1836
Senior Professor (Hanlin Academy) 翰林院教習大臣	Beijing		1836
Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent 太子太保	(honorary title)		1838
Grand Mentor of the Heir Apparent ³ 太子太傅	(honorary title)		1846

2. Since the governor-general also controlled military and naval forces as well as being the emperor's eye and ear over all the personnel in the provinces, he also held the ex-officio titles of President of the Board of War (兵部尚書) and Senior Vice-President of the Censorate (都察院左都御史).

3. Ruan Yuan was the sixth person in the Qing dynasty to be so honoured during his lifetime.

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Exterior wall of the Ruan family shrine on Wen Xuan Lane

Master Ruan's Island, West Lake, Hangzhou

Portrait of Ruan Yuan at fifty-six

The Canton Fire, 1822

A page of Ruan Yuan family letter at the National Library, Beijing

Shan Shi Pan

Portrait of Ruan Yuan at eighty from Vissière in *T'oung Pao* (1904)

Notes on Transliteration and Other Matters

I have opted for the pinyin, which makes it easier to use the Chinese software. For quotations from sources using the Wade-Giles, I have kept the original, followed by pinyin in case a particular name or term is of significance. Since I have placed the Chinese characters immediately after the transliteration as well as in the glossary and index, there should be no confusion.

For individuals who have adopted their own transliteration in spelling their names, such as Wei Peh T'i or Chan Hok-lam, I have kept the original.

For geographical terms, I have been inconsistent. I use Beijing, Hangzhou, and Yangzhou, but have stayed with Canton and Taipei.

For abbreviations of long work titles, I have decided to be inconsistent once more.

For documents, I abbreviate. For example, *Gongzhong Dang* becomes GZD, *Juji Lufu* becomes JJLF. For titles of books, on the other hand, to make the notes more easily recognizable to the reader, I have opted to use the title or an abbreviated form of the title rather than by using an acronym. For example, *Leitang Anzhu Diziji* has become *Diziji*, *Qingdai Tongshi* has remained *Qingdai Tongshi*. Except for a few titles, such as *ECCP* (*Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*), *CHOC* (*Cambridge History of China*), *YJSJ* (*Yanjing Shiji*), *YZBT* (*Yingzhou Bitan*), and *YTCJ* (*Yangzhou Teachers' College Journal*). I have found the acronyms frustrating, so have chosen not to use them in most of the cases.

There are existing English translations for some of the documents and publications used in this book, but I have chosen to put the text into English myself. All translations, unless otherwise specified, are mine.

All the errors, of course, are also mine.

Reign Titles of Qing Emperors

Title	Reign Dates	Abbreviations
Shunzhi 順治	1644–61	SZ
Kangxi 康熙	1662–1722	KX
Yongzheng 雍正	1723–35	YZ
Qianlong 乾隆	1736–95*	QL
Jiaqing 嘉慶	1796–1820	JQ
Daoguang 道光	1821–30	DG
Xianfeng 咸豐	1851–61	XF
Tongzhi 同治	1862–74	TZ
Guangxu 光緒	1875–1908	GX
Xuantong 宣統	1908–11	XT

* This emperor abdicated in favour of his son in 1795, but kept his rule until his death in February 1799.

Introduction

A single biographical study may bring into focus the critical problems and the atmosphere of an age, and thus help bridge a wide gap in our understanding of the history of (an era).¹

Arthur F. Wright

This study explores the life and work of Ruan Yuan (1764–1849), a scholar-official of significance in mid-Qing China prior to the Opium War, before traditional institutions and values became altered by incursions from the West. His distinction as a scholar and patron of learning has been recognized by both his contemporaries and modern scholars. His name is mentioned in almost all the works on Qing history or Chinese classics because of the wide range of his research and publications. More than eighty titles of his publications are extant, and a number of these are still being reprinted at the start of the twenty-first century. He was also exulted as an honest official and an exemplary man of the ‘Confucian persuasion’.² Details of his personal life and his work as an official, however, are less known.

His life as a private individual can be gleaned from contemporary writings, including his own poems as well as those by his wife. A certain amount of information on him can be culled from official sources and his own publications. Stored in the Qing archives are a few hundred documents pertaining to Ruan Yuan, enough for a researcher to reconstruct a fuller record of his government service. In addition to chronological biographies (*liezhuan* 列傳) compiled shortly after his death, there are several brief biographies compiled in the twentieth

1. Arthur F. Wright, ‘Values, Roles, and Personalities’, in *Confucian Personalities*, edited by Arthur F. Wright (1962), p. 11.

2. This term, defined as ‘a matched set of attitudes, beliefs, projected actions: a half-formulated moral perspective involving emotional commitment’, is adapted from Marvin Myers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion* (1957), as cited by Wright in ‘Introduction’, *The Confucian Persuasion* (1960), p. 3.

century,³ but there is yet no full-length study of him in English, or in any language that makes use of extant archival documents.

Since this is the first full-length biographical study of Ruan Yuan in English, and since it is also aimed at presenting ‘the atmosphere of an age’ and ‘the critical problems and the atmosphere’ of the era immediately before the Opium War as well, as exhorted by Professor Wright, I have included background information such as the private life as a son, husband, and father, and function of Chinese institutions, the training of an official, the route taken by an official from childhood to officialdom, influences other than his ability that led him to key appointments, the background of early nineteenth-century China — including restiveness of the populace, patronage of scholarship, imperial power and gentry official relations, internal control and foreign relations — all in the context of a biographical study of one scholar-official, Ruan Yuan.

The Qing period has attracted the attention of historians writing in English since the middle of the twentieth century. These studies have comprised political, economic, intellectual, cultural, and social history, including gender issues. The two emperors with long reigns have been represented: Kangxi (seventeenth century) by Jonathan Spence and Silas Wu and Qianlong (eighteenth century) by Harold Hahn, although strictly speaking, these publications are not biographies. There are several biographies of individuals of the mid-Qing era, notably those of Yuan Mei (袁枚 1716–98) by Arthur Waley, Zhang Xuecheng (章學誠 1739–1801) by David S. Nivison, and Chen Hongmou (陳宏謀 1696–1771) by William T. Rowe. The men portrayed were active during the eighteenth century. Nineteenth-century China of the Jiaqing and Daoguang years to which Ruan Yuan belonged was different. Kangxi and Yongzhen were consolidating the Qing rule, its territory and institutions, firmly establishing the revenue bases, for instance, while Qianlong was able to enjoy the fruits of their labours. Perhaps he ruled too long and overextended the available resources, his successors had to struggle without a sense of positive accomplishments.

This post-Qianlong era is already under scholarly scrutiny. The study on Ruan Yuan is my attempt to be a part of this effort that seeks to redress the need for a biographical study of a man whose life and work can help to enhance our understanding of China of the nineteenth century before the Opium War.

3. Paul Vissière, ‘Le Biographe de Jouàn Yuan’, *T’oung Pao* II: 5 (1904), pp. 561–96 [in French]; Yang Mi (仰彌), ‘Ruan Wenda Shishu’ (阮文達事述) [Life and work of Ruan Yuan], *Zhonghe Monthly* (中和月刊) 1:9 (1940), pp. 42–61 [in Chinese]; Fijitsuka Chikashi (藤塚鄰), ‘Gen Undai to Richo no Kingendo’ (阮雲臺と李朝の金阮堂), *Sho-en* (書苑) 6:2 (Tokyo 1942), pp. 1–14 [in Japanese]; Fang Chao-ying, ‘Biography of Juan Yuan’, in *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period* (hereafter *ECCP*) (1943–4), pp. 399–402 [in English]; Wolfgang Franke, ‘Juan Yuan 1764–1849’, *Monumenta Serica* 9 (1944), pp. 53–80 [in German].

Looking at Qing China before the Opium War

Susan Mann Jones and Philip Kuhn wrote in 1978 in the *Cambridge History of China* that the early decades of nineteenth-century China had been heretofore studied backwards from the Opium War (1840–1) and the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64). Instead, they suggested that the era be viewed:

more accurately from a perspective that looks ahead, out of the context of developments of the late eighteenth century. From this direction, we are able to see more sharply the limits of our understanding of the number of important problems.⁴

Henceforth, Jones and Kuhn, and other like-thinking historians as well, began to approach this era in its chronological sequence, as a passage from the High Qing of the Qianlong to the era immediately after the Opium War. Writing in Chinese, Huang Aiping (黃愛平) of the Institute of Qing History, People's University, looked at this period as a transition between the eighteenth century and the post-Opium war years, in a chapter entitled 'The Decline of the Jiaqing and Daoguang Era of the Mid-Qing' for inclusion in a general survey of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties.⁵

Eighteenth-Century China

Historians have hailed the eighteenth century as 'the last brilliant epoch of the old Chinese Imperial order'.⁶ All indicators seemed to point to the successes of Manchu rule. Political control had been firmly established, with power centred in imperial hands exercised through the Grand Council. Economically, both agriculture and commerce were sound and essentially the countryside was peaceful. Learning, literature, and the arts were flourishing. The Qianlong Emperor himself was the personification of a cultured Confucian gentleman. Material attainments attesting to the glories of the dynasty were his enlargement of the palaces, in the capital and outside the Great Wall. The summer retreat in Jehol (Chengde 承德) was doubled in size, and the old summer palace Yuan Ming Yuan (圓明園) was reconstructed in the style of a European villa. Foreign

4. Susan Mann Jones and Philip Kuhn, 'Dynastic Decline and the Roots of Rebellion', in *Cambridge History of China* (hereafter *CHOC*) 10:1 (1979), p. 52.

5. Huang Aiping (黃愛平), 'Jia Dao Zhongshuai' (嘉道中衰), in *Yuan Ming Qing Shi* (元明清史), edited by Guo Chengkang (郭成康) and others (2002), pp. 499–532.

6. Harold L. Kahn, 'A Matter of Taste: The Monumental and the Exotic in the Qianlong Reign', in *The Elegant Brush: Chinese Painting under the Qianlong Emperor 1735–1795*, edited by Ju-hsi Chou and Claudia Brown (1985), p. 208.

missionaries continued to serve the court, and, as in the case of Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766), worked as architects, astronomers, engravers, musicians, and painters.⁷ A multitude of scholars gathered in Beijing to compile the *Emperor's Four Treasuries* (*Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書), which embodied the quintessence of intellectual attainments of Confucian scholarship. Further, his six southern tours made him visible to the populace. His ten military campaigns brought him glory and adoration, and these successes were commemorated on copper plates especially finished in France.⁸ Earlier tax reform measures of the Kangxi and Yongzhen reigns had filled the treasuries. If towards the end of the Qianlong reign the storehouses were overburdened, causes other than the emperor's ventures were found to shoulder the blame.

The population grew to 400 million at the end of the century, with widely diversified lifestyles. On the top of the ladder were the salt merchants of Yangzhou. Here Huang Aiping also found the corrupt officials, who were 'scattering gold as if it were dirt' (*huijin rutu* 揮金如土) as well. Like the salt merchants, these officials vied with each other showing off their lifestyle of extreme luxury, expending 'tens of thousands of taels on celebrations and commemorations of birthdays, weddings, funerals, and burials'.⁹ When Jiaqing confiscated the properties of Heshen's circle, Fuchan'an (福長安, d. 1799), was found to have owned a villa in Beijing that comprised 474 rooms, with 282 seraglios in the gardens, and more than 6,000 items of luxury in his palace in Chengde.¹⁰ On the lower end, the classic economist Adam Smith found contemporary Chinese society to be a mass of hungry peasants in rags, 'eager to fish up the nastiest garbage, ...'.¹¹ His contemporary, Thomas Malthus, who must have read the same sources, saw the same people as being 'glad to get any putrid offal that European labourers would rather starve than eat'.¹²

7. See Cecil and Michele Beurdeley, *Giuseppe Castiglione: A Jesuit Painter at the Court of the Chinese Emperor*, translated into English by Michael Bullock (1971); Macau Museum of Art exhibition catalogue, *The Golden Exile*, a survey of the Western missionaries' painting school of the Qing dynasty court (2001); and Fu Dongguang (傅東光), 'Western Missionary Painters and Paintings of Palace Buildings', *Review of Culture* (2002) Macao, pp. 187–90.

8. See Joanna Waley-Cohen, 'Commemorating War in Eighteenth Century China', *Modern Asian Studies* 30: 4 (1996), pp. 869–99; Lang Shining (朗世寧), *Qingdai Yuzhi Tongban Hua* (清代御製銅版畫) (1999).

9. Huang, p. 512.

10. Huang, p. 512.

11. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), cited in R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed* (1977), p. 24.

12. Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on Principle of Population* (1798), cited in R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed* (1977), p. 24.

The historian F. W. Mote, meanwhile, without the Marxist perspective of Mainland observers and less self-righteous than eighteenth-century worldly philosophers who found the Chinese conditions useful to prove the validity of their theories, noted that underlying discontent¹³ was already discernable although the general situation was more than satisfactory.

... the sheer mass of Chinese society constitutes a defining element in its history. The impressive achievement of that society is that utilizing the full array of its traditional public and private institutions it was able to feed, clothe, house, and care for so large a body of people throughout so vast a territory. Westerners who become familiar with conditions in China in Qing times often compared China favourably with Europe, remarking that the masses of ordinary people were well ordered, cheerful, and mannerly, mostly well fed and well housed, and with great capacities for energetic pursuit of their personal and family interests. The general well-being of society can be inferred from the increasing participation of people at sub-elite and commoner levels in a growing range of organizational contexts, from commerce to philanthropy to religious and civic organizations.¹⁴

China in the Context of British Expansion Scheme

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the effects of the industrial revolution were already felt in Europe and beyond. The Age of Mercantilism was about to end. Capitalist and industrial interests were pressuring governments to support their ventures in Asia. Commodore Perry did not succeed in opening Japan to American trade until 1854, but as early as 1756, the East India Company was already demanding that Shanghai be opened as a port for British trade in China.¹⁵ Meanwhile, since 1760, all Western trade was confined to a single port of Canton on the South China coast, with severe limitations to articles of trade and for movement of the traders. Chinese trade with Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, on the other hand, belonged to a different category altogether. Their traders, in the guise of tributary missions, enjoyed access to more important cities in the Chinese Empire. Russia, meanwhile, had a bilateral arrangement with the Qing Empire. The Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689) had allowed the presence of a Russian Mission in the imperial capital of Beijing.

In 1793, King George III sent Lord Macartney, an extremely prestigious nobleman with impeccable credentials, to the Qing court. Qianlong received the mission graciously at the summer retreat in Chengde, but the Chinese determination not to negotiate any matter remained steadfast, other than allowing

13. F. W. Mote, *Imperial China 800–1800* (1999), p. 941.

14. Mote, *Imperial China* (1999), p. 941.

15. Betty Wei, *Shanghai, Crucible of Modern China* (1987), pp. 17–8.

the mission to present birthday greetings to the emperor in person without demanding the *kowtow*. In the meantime, Europe, including Britain, was embroiled in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. It was not until after the Congress of Vienna (1815) that another emissary, Lord Amherst, journeyed to Beijing to make a further attempt to expand British trade beyond Canton.

After the Monroe Doctrine closed Latin America to European interests (although arguably not the British) in 1823, British efforts in China intensified further. It was during this period the British tried to redress the unfavourable balance of trade by bringing from India opium to China in exchange for silver, which eventually led to armed conflict between the two empires. Ruan Yuan was then in Canton as Governor-General.

Conditions of Early Nineteenth-Century China

The commencement of Ruan Yuan's career in the provinces coincided with the beginning of the Jiaqing rule. The widespread though not universal excesses and corruption throughout the civil and military bureaucracy during the last two decades of the Qianlong reign left the country in a state of economic and political disorientation. As unrest expanded, the government was confronted with the increasingly pressing problems in maintaining security and control throughout the empire.

Weakened Banner organization and Qianlong's military campaigns had necessitated further enlargement of the armed forces, resulting in higher military expenditure, to 12 million taels annually. The cost of the suppression of the White Lotus Rebellion during the first nine years of the Jiaqing reign was 200 million. Revenue, which was estimated to be between 43 and 48 million taels when Qianlong ascended the throne in 1736, was still 70 million when he died in 1799, despite vast economic growth during his long reign, indicating that the amount should have been much higher.¹⁶

Further, there was a serious shortfall in the treasury's deposit of tax receipts. In 1800, when an audit was conducted, the shortfall in the Central Treasury was 9,250,000 taels. Despite efforts at reform, the shortfall increased further to nineteen million taels in 1812. Only four provinces delivered the amount they were supposed to be collecting. The cause for the shortage was recognized as 'pilfering' by officials, who supplied themselves as well as other officials all up and down the line.¹⁷ By 1820, the shortage problem had become 'the obsessive

16. Immanuel Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China* (1970), p. 169.

17. Jones and Kuhn, p. 128.

preoccupation of the bureaucracy.’¹⁸ It was difficult, albeit impossible, for the Qing treasury to recover. To improve the balance between expenditure and revenue, pressure was exerted to collect more taxes, with the brunt of the burden of payment falling on the peasants, who, at that time, were paying as much as 250 percent of the amount assessed.¹⁹

The population at the start of the nineteenth century was about 400 million. Despite the introduction of new crops, food production had not increased to such an extent as to eliminate hunger and starvation. During the century the prices of grain rose by about 300 percent.²⁰ In theory, it meant that the peasants could now better discharge their tax obligations as they were producers of grains, but the hardship of the urban populace increased. In times of natural disaster, emergency relief measures had to be undertaken.

As people moved to the more fertile regions, overcrowding and unemployment resulted. These demographic pressures, together with tax exactions and food shortages, led to anti-government activities, during this period in the form of popular uprisings through organized secret societies with religious and political (anti-Qing) overtones. These rebellions were not yet widely spread, nor were they confined to Chinese subjects who followed a particular heterodox sect, as in the case of the White Lotus or the Eight Trigrams revolts. Minority ethnic groups, such as the Miao tribes in Hunan and Guizhou, were also restive. Local dissidents joined Chinese and foreign pirates in plaguing the coast, as well as coastal and maritime shipping.

Jiaqing made serious efforts to adopt centrally directed programmes to bring the country back on an even keel. His reforms, albeit with varying degrees of success, started with the Grand Council. By ridding Heshen and his corruptive practices, Jiaqing took further measures to streamline the operations of the government machinery. Through a series of edicts, he regularized the appointment and work of the Council clerks, for example, and improved the efficiency of communication by memorials. He did not reduce the power of the Grand Council,²¹ but increased their effectiveness by appointing men he and his councillors knew to provincial posts. Jones and Kuhn noted that more of the new officials were Chinese ‘who had won degrees and held offices after the Ho-

18. As cited in Jones and Kuhn, p. 128.

19. Hsü, p. 167.

20. Jones and Kuhn, p. 128; Huang, p. 511.

21. The emperor did not reduce the power or the effectiveness of the Grand Council. Both the council and the councillors ‘clearly continued to enjoy their former powers and privileges, stoutly backed by the emperor’s confidence in them’, Beatrice Bartlett, *Monarchs and Minister: The Grand Council in Mid-Ching China 1723–1820* (1991), p. 254.

shen era — drawn increasingly from the ranks of the predominantly Han Chinese censorate and the Hanlin Academy'.²² Ruan Yuan was one of these officials.

Ruan Yuan's official work became a part of the history of the Jiaqing and Daoguang efforts at governing the country. As a Confucian scholar of the era he promoted the gleanings of useful knowledge out of basic understanding of the classics. In particular, because of his assignment in Canton the decade before the controversy over trade, opium and relevant issues turned into a war which changed the course of history irretrievably, his on-the-spot decisions were of important consequence. The fact that he managed to keep his scholarly output at an impressive rate while he focused his time and energy as a civil servant only added to his uniqueness.

As a private person, he was an individual with an aura that came from his official attainments, but, from all accounts, he was not an arrogant man. His concerns for women, mostly due to his enlightened upbringing by his mother, were also remarkable for his time. In this attempt at recapturing his life and time, with less than perfect coverage but nevertheless adding to information heretofore not published, I hope to offer the scholarly world the portrait of a man of significance of pre-Opium War China.

Structure of the Book

The book begins with an introduction, followed by the main body divided into five parts, and closes with a conclusion. There are appendices and bibliographies. In addition, although the Chinese characters are already in the text, there is a glossary for the convenience of readers.

Part One

The part comprises three chapters in chronological order. Chapter 1 gives the background and ambience of historical Yangzhou, especially the eighteenth century, into which Ruan Yuan was born and from which he emerged onto the national scene. His childhood, in the tradition of the time, was spent studying the classics, in preparation for the various levels of the civil service examination. Chapter 2 shows Ruan Yuan as an examination candidate and a Hanlin Bachelor in Beijing, broadening his intellectual horizons and political spheres of influence. It also calls attention to the importance of personal connections as well as being in the right place at the right time for a man to launch and keep a government

22. Jones and Kuhn, *CHOC* 10: 1 (1979), p. 118.

career during the era. Integrity and judgement mattered. Chapter 3 offers Ruan Yuan as Director of Studies, first in Shandong and then in Zhejiang, as the first out of the capital assignment for promising young officials. Here, in the provinces with rich heritage, classical scholarship, as well in intellectual endeavour, Ruan Yuan began to develop a lifelong interest in literary creativity and patronage of scholarship.

Part Two

Still keeping to the chronological order, this part consists of five chapters, each focusing on Ruan Yuan's work in a province as CEO. For this part, the extant Qing archives provided a unique source of information some of which is not available in published records.

Ruan Yuan's long tenure in several exposed strategic provinces south of the Yangzi and on the coast, as well as Yunnan and Guizhou bordering Southeast Asia, where responses to immediate and potential problems had to be formulated and tested, it is possible to delineate a significant issue of the day — security and control — for close scrutiny. The problems Ruan Yuan confronted as a provincial official, including coastal piracy (Chapter 4), secret societies (Chapter 5), jurisdiction over foreign nationals and foreign naval presence in Chinese waters (Chapter 6), and border disputes involving tributary states and ethnic minorities in Yunnan and Guizhou (Chapter 7), and even in the area of orphan and indigent care and disaster relief (Chapter 8), are illustrative of those the Qing government of the early nineteenth century had to deal with in establishing its policies on preservation of law and order in the provinces.

The varied lengths of the chapters, unfortunately, depended on the amount of material available to this research.

Part Three

A discourse was started when I was challenged for the use of the term 'leisure' to describe Ruan Yuan's scholarly deeds. Western minds which take for granted serious musicians 'playing' the piano, the cello, or ice hockey as professional endeavours, nevertheless find it difficult not to identify the Chinese use of the term 'leisure' with frivolous activities. So perhaps a few words here are appropriate to explain why I have placed these activities under the category of 'leisure' to distinguish them from his official acts. For scholars who did not hold government positions and who expended time and efforts on scholarship and writing, they would have to take their work seriously, because they were not doing anything

else. For them, then, playing chess or listening to music would be leisurely activities, while writing poetry and practising calligraphy could be considered serious scholarly pursuits.

For Ruan Yuan, ‘work’ was as a government official, for the exercise of which he received payment. All other pursuits, although involving intellectual efforts, were ‘leisure’, meaning that these pursuits were outside the realm prescribed by his government job descriptions and were not attended to while he was sitting in his official chair. In this respect, I have the support of the Jiaqing Emperor who had made it extremely clear by using explicit words (in his own hand with a vermilion brush on a memorial)²³ that scholarly activities were ‘play’ (*wan* 玩) and government responsibilities were serious undertakings.

Since Ruan Yuan’s writings and his patronage of scholars were closely linked, I have placed both topics together in Chapter 9. Comments by scholars across the seas, from his time to ours, are presented in this chapter. I also made some observations on the ‘Yangzhou School of Learning’.

Part Four

Here the private Ruan Yuan, as a son and man of the Confucian persuasion, is depicted. In Chapter 10 I show how his ancestors and communities benefited from his status, in the Confucian tradition. I also show how his sons received the benefits of a successful father. In Chapter 11, I examine the women in his life: his mother, second wife, concubines, a daughter and a granddaughter. The sources include poems written by his wife, often as correspondence with Ruan Yuan. I have also given a picture of the women in the context of educated gentry women during the mid-Qing.

Part Five

This study continues with Ruan Yuan as a senior statesman. He was recalled to Beijing as Grand Secretary when he was seventy-two, whereby ending a career of almost two score years of government service in the provinces. Until 1838 when he retired to Yangzhou he remained in the capital, enjoying the life of a first-

23. *Gongzhong Dang* (hereafter, GZD) JQ019639 (JQ20/8/22 [1815/9/24]). The emperor’s words were: ‘Ruan Yuan pays no attention to my concerns on capturing the bandits. His memorials are full of excuses. Don’t tell me that he is wasting time playing at compiling books and establishing academies.’

rank senior official. He held the title Grand Secretary, concurrently Senior President of the Board of War, Acting President of the Censorate, Reader of the Palace Examination, and Senior Professor of the Hanlin Academy. He attended to other administrative and ceremonial matters as well, all of which wielded very little power, but they gave him a great deal of pleasure and prestige, nevertheless.

Very little has been written about capital officials, especially senior officials. It is interesting to note that they actually participated in undertakings that can be classified as the personal life of the emperor. For instance, Ruan Yuan was a part of the birthday celebration of the dowager empress, and he deputized for the emperor at sacrifices in the imperial tombs. The senior officials also were invited to Spring Festival festivities in the Forbidden City, including partaking of meat from the sacrificed animals. Ruan Yuan first came to serve the dynasty at the time of his grandfather, Daoguang treated him with respect, as a loyal retainer which he was.

In this chapter, mostly due to chronological orderliness, I discuss the issue whether Ruan Yuan was a supporter, or even instigator, of the legalization of opium trade movement in 1838.

His retirement of eleven years was spent in Yangzhou (Chapter 13), respected by neighbours and sought by younger scholars. The emperor did not forget him, sending at Chinese New Year's meat from the imperial sacrifices, and a boatload of presents for his eightieth birthday. This chapter has been enriched by the discovery of letters (actually memoranda to various members of his household) written during this period.

Despite verbal testaments to Ruan Yuan's integrity, notably from such diverse sources as the Daoguang Emperor and William Jardine, no financial records are extant to show how Ruan Yuan's money was earned and spent. Based on salaries and other sources of revenue, however, an estimate can be made of his income from official sources, at least. The letters, rather, memos, written to members of his family during his retirement, albeit without individual dating, helped clarify the assertion by general agreement that Ruan Yuan was an honest official.

The Appendices

Appendix I comprises charts for Ruan Yuan's ancestors and descendants; Appendix II the organization of the pirate confederations off the coast of Zhejiang, Ruan Yuan's first major challenge as a provincial governor. In Appendix III are the names of individuals whose relationship with Ruan Yuan was as scholars. I have chosen not to provide details of the scholars. Dates and other information are available when a name appears in the text, however. I have, moreover,

provided a list of publications from which the names are extracted. In Appendix IV Ruan Yuan's publications are listed according to modern library classification schemes. I have also explained the titles in English.

The Liu Fenggao Case in 1809, involving alleged examination irregularities, led to the dismissal of Ruan Yuan as Governor of Zhejiang and a temporary breach with the emperor. The documents on this case are extant in the archives. It is such an interesting case and a good illustration for the points I want to make on the importance of integrity on civil service examinations, but there is no appropriate place, hence I put the case in a separate Appendix V.

Ruan Yuan's relationship with the Jiaqing Emperor is examined further. The men were close in age, and shared the tutelage of Zhu Gui. Their interests were similar, and they worked closely on important issues of the day. However, at no time was there any intimacy. No sense of camaraderie could exist between the emperor and an official. As events unfolded, it was clear that the Ruan Yuan had to tread very, very gently. His fate depended on the good disposition of the emperor.

Appendix IV is a brief account of Ruan Yuan as Director-General of Grain Transport.

Sources

Chronological Biographies

There is a plethora of chronological accounts (*liezhuan genre* 列傳) of Ruan Yuan's life and work, but these sources comprised mostly lists of his scholarly publications with his curriculum vitae. They are valuable, but details are lacking.

Ruan Yuan's official chronological biography compiled by the Historiography Office, at least the copy presented to the Daoguang Emperor before the yellow tapes covering the phrases or sentences he wished censored were placed, is more detailed and an excellent source. It became clear that the emperor had a hand in what information he did not want to leave to posterity. In Ruan Yuan's case, not only was the entire Liu Fenggao affair crossed out, so was each and every time the emperor censured Ruan Yuan for some minor offence.

Ordinarily, local gazetteers are a good source for biographical studies. Here, however, their usefulness was limited, principally because the compilers of the gazettes cited mostly sources emanating from Ruan Yuan.

Ruan Yuan's Own Compilations

Of Ruan Yuan's published works, two titles are essential to this research. *Leitang Anzhu Diziji* (雷塘庵主弟子記) recorded events as they took place; *Yangjing Shiji* (擘經室集) gave in his own words accounts of family, friends and activities of his lifetime. His poems, scattered throughout his publications, and those by his wife and friends, all served to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the man and his time.

Other Documents and Publications

Attached are three bibliographies. Since the archival documents have been a rich node of information, I have put this resource in a separate bibliography. Since the research on Ruan Yuan covered a multitude of topics, I have consulted a large number of published works. The Chinese-language sources have been placed in Bibliography II with a couple of essays in Japanese, and the Western-language sources, principally English, in Bibliography III.

Conversations

A unique source, one that gave me the greatest pleasure and satisfaction, was the conversations I enjoyed with the current generation of Ruan Yuan's descendants and neighbours. The men and women reinforced what I had learned from printed sources, imparting information and flavour, and provided me with a personal link to Ruan Yuan. What turned out to be the most surprising discovery, in the collection of the late Dr Wang Shih-chieh, were letters written by Ruan Yuan as a young examination candidate and Hanlin Bachelor, that provided insight into his life before he embarked on his career in the provinces.

Concluding Comments

Ruan Yuan was an able and extraordinary individual by any yardstick, but his phenomenal successes were also due to his ability to manage within the prevailing system and from being in the right place at the right time. Here, his long life (eighty-six years) and his extended career (thirty-eight years in the provinces, and forty-nine years altogether), serve to show how the institutions which had been firmly established by the High Qing emperors were still in place and in the large part working. Dynastic decline as defined by Jones and Kuhn, therefore, did not begin until after the Opium War. Whereas the officials could still overcome

domestic problems — pirates and secret societies, but the Western incursions were totally outside their experience. So they could not even get to the roots of the problems, not to say finding solutions for them.

This study, therefore, should fit into what the late Professor Arthur F. Wright had exhorted.

PART ONE

The Making of a Scholar-Official

1

The Formative Years: Yangzhou, 1764–86

Ruan Yuan's Native Place

Although official records indicate Ruan Yuan as being from Yizheng (儀徵), a county in the Yangzhou Prefecture of Jiangsu Province, actually he was a native of the County of Beihu (北湖) in the prefecture.¹ It was his grandfather, Ruan Yutang (阮玉堂 1695–1759), who first adopted Yizheng as the Ruan native place when he registered for military degree examinations during the first decade of the eighteenth century. Since Yizheng's examination quotas were more favourable than those of the other counties of the prefecture, it was not uncommon for eligible boys from other counties to opt for Yizheng as their native place, a practice officials condoned at that time.² Ruan Yuan was to make his home in the city itself after he became a renowned scholar and official. Born into an ordinary family of gentry status but without wealth, however, his childhood was spent outside the mainstream of the city's economic and social activities.

1. Foreword, *Yangzhou Beihu Xiaozhi* (揚州北湖小志), in *Yanjing Shiji* (學經室集, hereafter *YJS*) II:2. See also Ruan Yanxi (阮衍喜), 'Ruan Yuan Jiguan Zheng' (阮元籍貫證), *Yangzhou Shifa Xueyuan Xuebao* (Yangzhou Teachers' College Journal, 揚州師範學院學報, hereafter *YTCJ*) 1986:3, p. 158. Ruan Yuan's chronological biography records the Ruan ancestors to have moved to Jiangxi during the Southern Song, then to the Huai-Yang region at the end of the Ming, *Leitang Anzhu Diziji* (雷塘庵主弟子記, hereafter *Diziji*) 1:1. Tobie Meyer-Fong, *Building Culture in Early Qing Yangzhou*, (2003), refers to Yangzhou as Ruan Yuan's 'home town', p. 91. Antonia Finnane, *Speaking of Yangzhou: A Chinese City* (2004), gives Ruan Yuan's background as 'genteel poverty in a city where wealth and power mattered', p. 278.

2. At its height, Yizheng was the seat of the Inspector of Salt of the Huai-Yang region. See Feng Erkang (馮爾康), 'Qingdai Yizheng Rencai de Xingqi ji Yuanjin', in *Yangzhou Yanjiu* (揚州研究) (1996), edited by Feng Erkang, pp. 537–69. Officials and merchants in Yizheng promoted education and obtained an examination quota for their sons during the early Qing. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, fewer candidates were competing for the same quota.

Tangible proof that the child Ruan Yuan was not a part of the opulence of eighteenth-century Yangzhou was the fact that he was denied access to the city's many famous gardens, as he wistfully pointed out in his old age.³ These gardens of Yangzhou, exquisite with flowers, shrubs, rockeries, pavilions and follies, serene retreats for the wealthy, were barred from trespassing by ordinary children such as Ruan Yuan. He later wrote that Qing Yangzhou was at its height during the Qianlong reign (1736–95), when the salt merchants built exquisite gardens, in part as a preparation for six imperial visits.⁴ By the end of the Jiaqing reign (1796–1820), many of these gardens were falling into neglect.⁵ As it transpired, Ruan Yuan was one of the most prominent men to emerge from Yangzhou onto the national scene, since the city had produced few individuals of comparable political and scholarly attainments. To this day, almost 160 years after his death, he is remembered with affection and awe by Yangzhou residents, who are brought up with Ruan Yuan as a part of the city's lore.⁶

Historic Yangzhou

Yangzhou was the most ancient of the five great historic cities of the lower Yangtze valley: Hangzhou in Zhejiang; and in Jiangsu Nanjing, Suzhou, Yangzhou, and later Shanghai. By the middle of the eighteenth century when Ruan Yuan was born, Yangzhou had been a seat of prefecture-level administration for more than two thousand years. Scholars argue as to the origin of the name, but 'Yangzhou' is found in classical texts such as the *Classic of Documents* and the *Classic of Rites*, both pre-date Confucius of the sixth century BC. Once called Guangling (廣陵), the name of yet another county in the prefecture, Yangzhou officially became the city's name during the Three Kingdoms era (222–77). At that time, a population estimated to be one million had migrated from the Central Plains to settle in this area of the lower Yangtze and the Huai valleys, known as the Huai-Yang (淮揚) Region. The land of rich alluvial soil was ready for planting. There were also mulberry trees, suitable for raising silk worms. The immigrants brought with them skills in agriculture and handicraft, thereby an economy based on rice and sericulture came into being. Leitang (雷塘), then a string of lakes, was a

3. Liang Zhangju (梁章距), *Guitian Suoji* (歸田瑣記) (1976 reprint), p. 1.

4. Finnane writes that 'the owners of private gardens in Yangzhou, with hardly an exception, were salt merchants, ...', *Speaking of Yangzhou* (2004), p. 189. See also Meyer-Fong, p. 27.

5. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement, 3.

6. I am grateful to Mr Wang Yigong (王以功) of Yangzhou whose family rented rooms from Ruan's descendants before 1949, for his recollections of anecdotes told to him, and repeating them in writing. Letters dated June 1988.



Map 1.1 The Grand Canal and Huai-Yang region

source of irrigation for the area. Subsequently, when the lakes dried up, Leitang became a site for cemeteries which contained a number of Ruan graves, in time also to include Ruan Yuan's own.

Yangzhou's importance in the national context was established during the Sui (隋) dynasty (581–618), when tidewaters changed the course of the Yangzi River and its sediments created a delta. The rich soil of the delta attracted settlers. Eventually the salt deposit led to the creation of a salt industry, making it possible for the region to become a major centre of economy throughout the imperial era. The city came into prominence also because of its location on the Grand Canal, built by the second Sui emperor, Yangdi (煬帝), who spent much of his time in Yangzhou. When he died, he was buried at Leitang.⁷ His Grand Canal, constructed to link various waterways between the Yellow River and the Yangzi delta, entered the Yangzi at Yangzhou. The city was on both sides of the canal until the end of the Tang dynasty (618–907), when the canal was redirected to its present location, to the east of the city.

Yangzhou's strategic location, on the Yangzi at the intersection of the Grand Canal, further enabled it to become a major port, a centre of trade between North and South China, and between the coastal provinces and the hinterland as well. In Tang and Song times, in addition to grain and salt, articles of trade were to include lumber and Jingdezhen ceramic ware from Jiangxi, medicinal herbs from Sichuan, and tea from all along the Yangzi. Craftsmen in Yangzhou produced copper mirrors, silk textiles, and objects made of silver and gold.

7. In the winter of 1805–6 when Ruan Yuan observed mourning by the graveside of his father, he often walked among the graves, some of which had been in existence for centuries. He came upon an imposing grave that appeared to have stood apart from the others. After questioning villagers, who had been referring to it as the 'imperial tomb', Ruan Yuan had it excavated. Upon recovery of a set of iron gates and a sacred way, he discussed this find with his friends Jiao Xun (焦循) and Yin Bingshou (尹秉壽), latter a noted calligrapher in the *li* (隸) style, which was popular with the Han Learning scholars at that time. A stone stele was erected in 1815 pronouncing this tomb to be that of the second Sui emperor. This stele subsequently disappeared, but was rediscovered in 1931. It now stands in front of a large tomb, declaring it to be reconstructed in the twelfth year of the reign of the Jiaqing Emperor (1807). Scholars continue to question whether this tomb does in fact contain the remains of the Sui emperor, but it is generally accepted that he was buried somewhere in the environs of Leitang. Meyer-Fong attributes such discoveries as Ruan Yuan's persistent efforts to connect himself and his family to various locales in Yangzhou, *Building Culture* (2003), p. 118. 'Sui Yangdi Lingkao' (隋煬帝陵考) [On the tomb of the Sui Yangdi], in Du Zhaotang (杜召棠), *Woyan Ji* (渦延集) (1963), II, pp. 28–30. *The Sui History* shows Yangdi to have died in the South and was buried at Leitang. *Yangzhou Fuzhi* (揚州府志) records that in the north of the city there were two lakes named Leitang — the Upper Lake about six *li* long and the Lower about seven. By the Qing, the lakes had dried and the land was covered with grass, used as cemeteries.

Shipbuilding was a major industry. After 763 AD, when rebellions and invasions devastated the economy of North and Central China, the Huai-Yang region became the chief source of revenue for the Tang court.⁸ By the early Song (tenth century), when market towns were developing on a large scale in the region, Yangzhou came 'to share the lower Yangtze and Grand Canal water transportation system that served both the government and private trade'.⁹

Yangzhou was rebuilt and enlarged during the Song. Decision-makers doubled the size of the city by 'ingeniously enclosing a new city wall side-by-side with the old, leaving the former moat and north wall in place to divide the two halves',¹⁰ and connecting the parts of the city with bridges. Its economy became increasingly commercial as agriculture declined and sericulture died out. Trade was predominantly by water.

Cosmopolitan City

The city's further growth as a centre of domestic and international commerce at the end of the thirteenth century was a result of the construction of the new Yuan dynasty Grand Canal, evidence that the dynasty, with its power base in North China, needed to control the Huai-Yang region, centred in Yangzhou.¹¹ This new waterway, more or less along the route of the old canal of the Sui, again crossed the Yangzi at Yangzhou, enabling it to develop into a cosmopolitan city.

At that time, Marco Polo was said to be a resident. Although his claim of having governed Yangzhou for three years is not corroborated by historical sources, there is evidence which may give credence to his having lived in Yangzhou. Paul Pelliot found a mention of a 'Boluo' (波羅 Polo) in the *Yuan History* as an official in salt administration at Yangzhou.¹² The Mongol rulers of the Yuan dynasty (1206–1368) were less paranoid than the Manchu Qing emperors about harbouring foreigners in their midst. Apparently there was in Yangzhou a quarter for foreigners at that time. A tombstone, dated 1342, was found in 1951 by workers constructing a road near where the old city wall stood in the southern part of the

8. Xu Mingde (徐明德), 'Lun Tangdai Yangzhou Guoji Dagang de Fanrong yu Lishi Diwei' (論唐代揚州國際大港的繁榮與歷史地位), in *Yangzhou Yanjiu*, edited by Feng Erkang (1996), pp. 139–77. See also John King Fairbank, *China: A New History* (1994), pp. 85–6.

9. Frederick W. Mote, 'The Intellectual Climate in 18th-Century China', *Phoebus* 6:1 (1988), p. 33.

10. Mote, p. 33.

11. Finnane, pp. 24–5.

12. Paul Pelliot, 'Review of Charingnon's re-edition of Pauthier's *Le Livre de Marco Polo*', *T'oung Pao* 25 (1928), cited in Frances Wood, *Did Marco Polo Go to China?* (1993), p. 124.

city. The tombstone was finely incised with Latin script and a number of pictures depicting the life of St Katherine of Alexandra of the fourth century. The text of the inscription showed the occupier of the grave to be a 'Katerina, daughter of (the late) Sir Dominic de Viglione'.¹³

The city continued to grow. During the Ming, henceforth, Yangzhou once more was made the prefectural capital. Its strategic and economic significance was recognized by the Manchus as the Qing dynasty was being established.

Qing Yangzhou

Eighteenth-century Yangzhou continued to prosper from trade. In addition to canal transportation, there were government franchised commodities such as salt. The salt merchants of Yangzhou were noted for their great wealth and luxurious lifestyle, their aggregate profit being approximately 250 million taels in the second half of the century.¹⁴ It was estimated that sixty merchant families were involved in salt production and trade, accumulating a fortune totalling eighty or more million silver taels, a sum greater than the annual tax revenue of the Qing state at that time.¹⁵ Whereas earlier salt merchants used to reside as 'guests' in Yangzhou, leaving their families in Anhui, by the eighteenth century, Yangzhou had become their permanent residence.¹⁶

By Ruan Yuan's time, the salt merchants had been adopting Yangzhou as their place of abode for several generations. Their sons and grandsons studied the Confucian classics, some had taken and passed the civil service examinations, and a few had even become officials. Song Yuanqiang (宋元強), a scholar in Beijing, writes that 'some of the salt merchants were officials themselves. Others were sons of officials or had sons who were officials. In other cases, they were officials turned into merchants, or merchants who became officials.'¹⁷

The salt merchants influenced the development of other genres of culture in Yangzhou by expending their great wealth to the patronage of the arts. They

13. Francis A. Rouleau, SJ, 'The Yangzhou Latin Tombstone as a Landmark of Medieval Christianity in China', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 173/4 (1954), pp. 356–65. Rouleau's knowledge of Yangzhou had come from personal visits and from Henri Cordier's notes on the Gazetteer of the Prefecture of Yangzhou, p. 348, note 4.

14. Ho, Ping-ti, 'Salt Merchants of Yangzhou: A Study of Commercial Capitalism in Eighteenth Century China', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 17 (1954), pp. 130–58.

15. Ho, Ping-ti, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China* (1962), p. 35.

16. Recent scholarship on Anhui merchants includes Zhang Haipang (張海鵬) and Wang Tingyuan (王奕元), eds. *Hui Shang Yanjiu* (徽商研究) (1995); and Finnane, *Speaking of Yangzhou* (2004).

17. Song Yuanqiang (宋元強), *Qingchao de Zhuangyuan* (清朝的狀元) (1992), p. 139.

imposed their taste on the arts, including the visual, the performing, and the culinary arts. Somehow the merchants had been told that the only difference between the gentry and common man lay in the former's collection of antiques and art works.¹⁸ The merchants, therefore, collected antiques, sponsored calligraphers and painters, patronized music, the opera, tea houses and restaurants, all of which attracted traders and visitors from other areas to Yangzhou. As a result, the Yangzhou style evolved. The salt merchants 'engaged in and patronized standard scholarly pastimes, hosting literary gatherings and collecting books and paintings'.¹⁹ They encouraged the Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou (Yangzhou Baguai 揚州八怪) to develop their own styles, including abstractionism. These were scholars without official appointments who made good livings by selling their calligraphy and paintings. Since the merchants did not care about conforming to traditional idioms, these artists, comprising such notables as Jin Nong (金農 1687–1764) and Zheng Banqiao (鄭板橋 1693–1765), were able to exert individual characteristics of their own. *Pleasure Boats of Yangzhou* (Yangzhou Huafang Lu 揚州畫舫錄) by Li Dou (李斗) with a preface by Ruan Yuan, gives lively descriptions of contemporary arts, including the world of the courtesans.²⁰

The salt merchants de-intellectualized the Kun opera. They patronized Kun opera, bringing troupes from Suzhou and providing them with a ready audience. The classical traditions of the Kun opera appreciated by the scholars were too heavy for this more general audience of the commercial society in eighteenth-century Yangzhou. As a result, although the centre of Kun opera remained in Suzhou, it was in Yangzhou during the eighteenth century that 'modernized' lyrics became generally accepted. Visitors to Yangzhou included more than commercial travellers. The Kangxi and the Qianlong emperors both stopped at Yangzhou during their tours to the South, indicating that local aesthetic, intellectual, and culinary standards, at least, were sufficiently sophisticated to attract imperial presence, notwithstanding the fact that imperial barges coming down the Grand Canal from Beijing would pass Yangzhou anyhow. Kangxi toured the South six times, in 1648, 1689, 1699, 1703, 1705 and 1707, ostensibly to inspect personally conservancy projects to assure himself that 'dangers to increase the

18. Wang Zhenzhong (王振忠), 'Ming Qing Huishang yu Yangzhou Shi Wenhua de Tezheng he diwei' (明清徽商與揚州市文化的特徵和地位), in *Yangzhou Yanjiu*, edited by Feng Erkang, pp. 489–510.

19. Pao-chen Ch'en and Jan Stuart, 'Catalogue', in Wen Fong, *Images of the Mind* (1984), p. 255.

20. See Finnane's translation, 'Thin Horses of Yangzhou' by Wei Minghua (委明鏘), *East Asian History* 9 (1995), pp. 47–66. See also Guo Lichen (郭立誠), *Zhongguo Funu Shenghuo Shihua* (中國婦女生活史話) (1983), p. 135.

navigability of the Grand Canal²¹ was minimized. Qianlong also visited the lower Yangzi six times, in 1751, 1757, 1762, 1765, 1780 and 1784. In theory, Kangxi had insisted on not adding to the burdens of the populace by paying the travel cost out of his own funds. Yet, since he spent his time inspecting the water conservancy works, the salt merchants were solicited to build a palace for his use.²² His grandson, on the other hand, travelled in the style that was more imperial. The cost of his Southern tours was estimated to be ‘200,000,000 taels’.²³

The salt merchants also funded the establishment of academies for Confucian studies. The most noted academy in Yangzhou was the Plum Blossom Academy (Meihua Shuyuan 梅花書院). There had been an institution on top of the hill where there were several hundred plum trees during the Ming, sponsored by the Salt Commissioner, but as time passed it had fallen into disuse. In 1734, after the Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723–35) issued an edict to the provinces to increase support for Confucian studies, the Plum Blossom Academy was revived with funding by the salt merchant, Ma Yueguan (馬月貫 1688–1755). The new academy of sixty-four study rooms thrived until 1853, when it was destroyed by the Taiping forces.²⁴ Although several of Ruan Yuan’s contemporaries taught or studied at the academy, there is no evidence that Ruan Yuan had any connection with this institution, either as a student or as a noted scholar later. Nor is there any evidence that Ruan Yuan had taken part of the general merriment of Yangzhou of his time, either as a child or after he became a noted personage of the locality.

In the nineteenth century when the silting led the Qing court to abandon the Grand Canal in favour of transportation of the tribute grain by sea, and especially after the construction of the railroad towards the latter part of the century, Yangzhou declined as a city of national significance.

Ruan Ancestors

Zhaolian (昭樾 1780–1833), the Duc de St. Simon of the mid-Qing court, had suggested that Ruan Yuan came from a military background, but this fact has been largely ignored by the chronological biographers, and is not generally

21. Fang Chao-ying, Biography of Kangxi, in *ECCP*, pp. 328–9.

22. Zeng Xuewen (曾學文), ‘Kangxi Zhihe Dao Yangzhou’ (康熙治河到揚州), in *Lidai Minren yu Yangzhou*, pp. 235–9.

23. Fang Chao-ying, Biography of Qianlong, in *ECCP*, p. 370.

24. Cai Guihua (蔡貴華), ‘Yangzhou Meihua Shuyuan Kao’ (揚州梅花書院考), in *Yangzhou Yanjiu* (1996), edited by Feng Erkang, pp. 373–88.

known.²⁵ Ruan Yuan himself had written with pride about his military forebear.²⁶ Ruan records show that at least several generations of Ruan Yuan's forefathers were itinerant soldiers. It was at the end of the Southern Song, that the vagabond Ruan ancestors moved from Henan to the Huai-Yang area, back and forth between Jiangdu (江都) and Huai'an (淮安).²⁷

On record are the names of Ruan Yuan's forefathers since the latter part of the Ming dynasty (see Appendix IA). Ruan Yuan's eighth-generation ancestor, a Ruan Yan (阮嚴), settled in Yangzhou during the Wanli reign (1573–1619). He was recorded as the founder of the Ruan clan in Yangzhou.²⁸ A sixth-generation descendant of this paterfamilias, Ruan Kuangheng (阮匡衡), military *jinshi* in 1669 or 1670, resulting in the compilation of clan records, but only sketchy information dating to Ruan Yan could be traced. It was not until 1812–3 when Ruan Yuan was living in Huai'an (淮安) as Director-General of Grain Transport, that he managed to dig further into earlier Ruan family history, borrowing extensively from the records of the family of Ruan Kuisheng (阮葵生 1727–89), another official from the area with the same surname.²⁹

Ruan family records dating before the beginning of the Qing dynasty, or roughly 120 years before Ruan Yuan's birth, were not dependable. After Ruan Kuangheng, an uncle of Ruan Yuan's grandfather, received the military metropolitan degree during the Kangxi reign, honours were awarded posthumously to the ancestors as a result of his achievements. Ruan Yuan's grandfather, Ruan Yutang (阮玉堂), received the military metropolitan degree in 1715, making it possible for his branch of the clan to acquire gentry status as well as some land in the countryside north of the city, although no money seemed to have been accumulated.³⁰ His subsequent successes as an officer in the suppression campaigns against the Miao tribes and humane treatment of four thousand captives further added to the local prestige of the family.

25. Zhaolian, *Xiaoting Zalu* (嘯亭雜錄) [Miscellaneous notes from the Xiao pavilion], *juan* 10. I have seen dozens of biographies (*liezhuan*, 列傳) of Ruan Yuan. Only two authors paid any attention to Ruan Yuan's mercenary forebears.

26. For instance, see biography of his grandfather by Ruan Yuan in *YJSJ* II:1.

27. *Diziji*, 1.

28. Most likely Ruan Yan moved to Yangzhou as a young man towards the end of the Wanli reign because it was recorded that he had moved about 40 *li* to Gongdao (公道) Bridge, north of the city, sometime during the 1640s. Descriptions and maps of the Ruan graves are in *YJSJ* II:1.

29. *YJSJ* II:2.

30. *YJSJ* II:1. For more recent studies on Qing examinations, see Benjamin Elman, *Cultural History of Civil Examinations* (2000) and Iona Man-Cheong, *Class of 1761* (2004).

Ruan Chengxin (阮承信 1734–1805), Ruan Yuan's father and Ruan Yutang's youngest son and only male offspring by his second wife, was also reared in the military tradition. He did not, however, pursue a military career. Local lore claims that as a young man, Ruan Chengxin was spoiled and a wastrel, and gambled away whatever money he had on hand.³¹ As he grew into middle age, family circumstances forced him to join his maternal uncle, a merchant trading in salt containers made of bamboo, in a business venture which took him as far as Hangyang in Hubei.³² His only child, Ruan Yuan, was not reared in the military tradition ostensibly because he had been a sickly youngster.³³ In any case, Ruan Yuan was the only member of his family to reach officialdom by earning the metropolitan degree through the regular channel of the civil service examination system.

Ruan Yuan's Mother

For Ruan Yuan's achievements, credit must go to his mother, née Lin (林), an extraordinary woman who charted the direction of her son's early schooling as well as the formulation of his philosophy of life. The mother was the daughter of an official who was a 1753 provincial graduate and had served as District Magistrate of Datian (大田) in Fujian. She travelled with her father before her marriage, at the then comparatively late age of twenty-five, to Ruan Yuan's father. Evidently the Lin family educated their daughters as well as sons, for Ruan Yuan's mother had 'possessed literary knowledge and judgment that would put men to shame'.³⁴ She also excelled in composing rhymes, so her son claimed. Unfortunately, all her manuscripts were lost in a fire. It is interesting that, unlike other educated women even in her generation, she was never given a personal name.

She was a 'virtuous wife and good mother' of the Confucian persuasion. Moreover, she was a sensible household manager. She understood ritual practices; at least she knew the difference between Confucian Rite and popular practice

31. As related by Mr Yu Jingyi (余景義) in December 1978. This tale was reinforced by residents of the neighbourhood on my trips to Yangzhou.

32. Ruan Yuan, *Huanghai Yingling Ji* (淮海英靈集) (Shanghai reprint, 1937), p. 637. *Yanjia* (鹽筴), containers made from bamboo, were used to package salt. Although bamboo is grown in Jiangsu, the variety from Hubei and Sichuan is larger and stronger.

33. *YJS*/II:1.

34. This remark by Hu Xichen (胡西琴), a scholar and friend of Ruan Yuan's maternal grandfather, is quoted in biography of Ruan Yuan's mother, *YJS*/II:1.

for funerals. Her position must have been sufficiently secure in the community for her to be able to insist on practising what she believed. She refused to hire monks and priests to chant at the funerals of her father-in-law and mother-in-law, and, when accused of not observing the proper etiquette, she replied: 'Monks and priests are not a part of the rites of a Confucian funeral. Both the Ruan and the Lin families are reared in the Confucian tradition. There is no need to adopt popular practices which have nothing to do with Confucian Ritual.'³⁵ It was not a matter of avarice, for, when her husband's sisters were married, the dowries were generous. 'This is not the time to economize,' she reasoned. 'My husband's sisters are the daughters of my mother-in-law. I must abide by her standards and supply the girls with the kind of dowry she would have provided.'³⁶ Elsewhere, however, she practised economy wherever she could to save money. Most likely due to increasingly stringent financial circumstances after the death of her mother-in-law, she reduced the number of servants, 'cut her finger nails to the root',³⁷ and took over the housework herself. Breaking the tradition of gentry families hiring wet nurses for their babies, Ruan Yuan's mother nursed her son herself. 'My father-in-law was an honest official, so there is no money to afford the luxury of a large household,'³⁸ she was said to have declared.

Ruan Yuan's mother possessed sufficient knowledge in language and literature to teach her son more than basic reading and writing, using poetry and classical texts.³⁹ 'My mother began to teach me to read and write when I was five *sui*,'⁴⁰ wrote Ruan Yuan. Shortly thereafter, she introduced him to poetry. One childish effort to compose poetry is extant. It is a five-character couplet written when Ruan Yuan was six *sui*.⁴¹

Thick fog creates a suspicion that the mountains are distant,
A calm lake gives the impression that the banks are low.

35. *YJS*/II:1

36. *YJS*/II:1. In the lower Yangzi region, including Yangzhou, all furniture and household goods the newly married would need were provided by the bride's family. These goods formed a part of the bride's dowry, which included wooden tubs used for bathing and a commode, all lacquered in red. In time, the first child's layette was also provided by the maternal grandmother. These traditions are related by my mother, whose family had been in Nanjing since the Yuan dynasty.

37. *YJS*/II:1.

38. *YJS*/II:1.

39. *YJS*/II:1.

40. *YJS*/II:1. A Chinese child is considered to be one *sui* at birth. Thus, five *sui* is roughly equivalent to four years of age by Western reckoning.

41. Quoted by Fujitsuka Chikashi (藤塚鄰) in his chronological biography of Ruan Yuan, 'Gen Undai to Richo no Kingendo' (阮雲臺と李朝の金阮堂) (1942), p. 3.

The mother taught him to read Tang poets in the same sequence her father had taught her, and as his father in turn had taught him. The High Tang poets, such as Wang Wei (王維 699?–761), were read first because these poets were considered to represent ‘the peak of poetic excellence’.⁴² Bai Juyi (白居易 771–846) would come later. Ruan Yuan was to recall that ‘my mother wrote down the poems of Bai Juyi for me to learn. (Using these poems), she explained Chinese poetic rhymes and tones. It was from her, and not the masters, I learned to appreciate poetry before I was eight or nine *sui*’.⁴³ She also instilled in him a love of nature. Wherever Ruan Yuan served, he planted trees for environmental as well as aesthetic reasons. He dredged the West Lake in Hangzhou, topping the mound formed by dredged-up earth with willow trees to provide for a bird sanctuary, an innovative move even by today’s more ecologically conscious standards.⁴⁴

Ruan Yuan also learned from his mother how to approach difficult tasks, be they classical texts he learned as a child or political and strategic problems he handled as an official. Apparently, at the age of six, he was given passages from *The Book of Mencius* to recite by his teacher. He returned home from school in total despair because, as hard as he tried, he could not overcome his stuttering, a childhood handicap which he had overcome by the time he began to take examinations. His mother calmed him down, assuring him that ‘nothing can be gained by rushing about. First try to learn all about the task before you. Once you understand what you are supposed to accomplish, you will find that everything will come more readily.’⁴⁵ This skill of first comprehending what one had to undertake before tackling the task was to serve Ruan Yuan well later as he approached the many assignments he had to handle as a provincial official.

New Home, New Friends, and New Teachers

When he was nine *sui*, the family had to move out of the house built by his grandfather. Near their new home was a commemorative arch honouring the centennial of a person of local distinction. Here Ruan Yuan found two playmates surnamed Fang who lived in the neighbourhood. These were happy days since Ruan Yuan had two companions at study as well as at play. The two Fang boys, remembered primarily by their nicknames ‘Seventh Tiger and Eighth Tiger of

42. Burton Watson (translator and editor), *Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry* (1984), p. 197.

43. *YJS* II:1.

44. The island in the West Lake, popularly known as Master Ruan’s Island, still stands.

45. *YJS* II:1.

the Fang Family', whose antics and companionship Ruan Yuan was to recall nostalgically at the age of 78 *sui*.⁴⁶ Their parents were kind to him, and allowed the boys freedom of their house. Their father, Fang Litang (方笠塘), a licentiate (*lingsheng* 廩生, first degree holder), was remembered fondly as an extremely near-sighted and talkative gentleman. 'He was so short-sighted that he always wore spectacles, with jade pendants dangling behind his ears, in perpetual motion as he talked and swayed his head.'⁴⁷

Ruan Yuan's mother found opportunities for him to study under the best teachers available. While teaching him the art of composing and appreciation of poetry herself, she sent him to accomplished scholars to learn the classics and the skills for writing essays needed to pass civil service examinations. There is a record of all of his teachers as Ruan Yuan wrote the biography of each of them. At six *sui* he was sent to Jia Tianning (賈天凝), a local scholar who was married to his father's sister. This was the teacher who had sent him home in tears for failing to master passages from Mencius. After the family moved, Ruan Yuan studied under Qiao Chunling (喬春齡), a former pupil of Jia.⁴⁸ Ruan Yuan was fond of Qiao, a sickly man who had neither married nor passed any civil service examination. Still, Ruan Yuan respected his learning, his dignity and his eccentricities. When Ruan Yuan was Director of Studies in Shandong from 1793 to 1795, he brought Qiao to Qufu (曲阜) so that the old scholar could visit the shrine of Confucius. When Qiao died, Ruan Yuan buried his remains in Yangzhou.

Like other boys throughout the centuries preparing for the civil service examinations, Ruan Yuan studied the prescribed curriculum. He started with memorization of the *Trimetric Classics* (*San Zijing* 三字經), graduating to the *Ten Thousand Character Classic* (*Qian Ziwen* 千字文). When he had mastered sufficient number of characters, he then studied the Four Books (Si Shu) — *Analects of Confucius*, *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, and *The Book of Mencius* (孟子). Apparently he had learned the Four Books, at least *Mencius*, by the time he was six. Eventually, he learned the Five Classics (*Wu Jing*) — *The Classic of Odes*, *The Classic of History*, *The Classic of Changes*, *The Classic of Rites*, and *The Classic of Filial Piety*. In addition, other classics, such as the *Rites of Zhou* (周禮), *Erya* (爾雅), and *The Zuo and Gongyang Commentaries* (*Zuo Zhuan* 左傳; *Gongyang Zhuan* 公羊傳) were also studied. Knowledge in such areas as astronomy, mathematics, history, and literature, especially poetry, was picked up along the way.

46. *YJSJ* Additional Supplement 2:7.

47. *YJSJ* Additional Supplement 2:7. Western-style eyeglasses were being adopted in China at that time by those who could afford them and who were open-minded enough to use them.

48. Biography of Qiao Chunling and Biography of Li Daonan by Ruan Yuan in *YJSJ* II:2.

To be able to write essays with good calligraphy was important. It was Li Daonan (李道南 1712–87) who taught Ruan Yuan the skills needed to write essays. When Ruan was seventeen *sui*, his mother decided that he was a promising enough student to be sent to study under Li, possibly the most respected scholar in the area the family could afford. Li had attained to the metropolitan degree, but had chosen to teach instead of pursuing an official career. Li emphasized ideas and composition, refusing to sacrifice content for form. He taught that ‘essays to interpret the classics must be free from extravagant ostentation. They ... are not to be used (merely) as a tool to pass examinations.’⁴⁹ In insisting upon discipline in learning and in articulating one’s ideas both orally and in writing, Li gave Ruan Yuan a solid foundation that served him well when he took the civil service examinations.

Ruan Yuan also learned from his father. At this time, when Ruan Yuan was studying with Qiao, his father had not yet embarked on the business trips that in a few years’ time were to take him away from home with increasing frequency. Ruan senior was an accomplished horseman and archer, having lived in army camps as a child. He was also knowledgeable in military literature. Whether he actually spent time instructing his son has not been supported by evidence, but Ruan Yuan gave his father credit for having explained to him the art and skills of deployment of troops through the writings of the prominent Song dynasty historian and statesman, Sima Guang (司馬光 1009–86).⁵⁰ Further, the father stressed that knowledge was only worthwhile when it was utilitarian.

The life of Ruan Yuan’s mother had not been easy. From Ruan Yuan’s writings, it is clear that he had had a modest and not infrequently impoverished childhood. On top of having to take care of the housework, she had to be responsible for the family’s move out of the house built by his grandfather. It was not clear whether the house had to be sold because of shortage of cash, or was taken in some form of foreclosure when Ruan Yuan was a young child. Later, it was bought back by his second wife and his concubines by selling or pawning their jewellery.⁵¹ The house was turned into a shrine honouring the Queen of Heaven (Tianmu 天母), the Bodhisattva Guanyin (觀音) and the Holy Mother of the Tai Mountain (Taishan Shengmu 泰山聖母). In this house was also a chapel to house the spiritual tablet of the mother, who had had a sentimental attachment to this house where she had lived as a young wife and where her only child was born. It is interesting

49. *YJSJ* II:2. Also see *Diziji* 1.

50. *YJSJ* II:2. The work from which the father recited passages was *The Art of War* (*Zizhi Tongjian*, 資治通鑑), completed in 1084.

51. *Yingzhou Bitan* (瀛舟筆談, hereafter *YZBT*) (1799–1805), 6. The verb used here is *shu* (贖), as in to redeem something that has been pawned.

that the house-turned-into-shrine honoured female deities important to women at that time should also laud Ruan Yuan's mother, who had disavowed Buddhist and Taoist practices as a part of the Confucian tradition at an earlier date.

Sitting Qualifying Examinations

There is no detailed record of what Ruan Yuan did from that time until 1778, except that the family suffered another setback in 1776 as their home was flooded during a freak storm when Ruan Yuan was thirteen *sui*. So, once again the family moved, to Garden Lane (Huayuan Xiang 花園巷) in the centre of the city. In 1778 he began taking the preliminary examinations (*tongzi shi* 童子試) which were to qualify him for the civil service examinations for literary degrees and government appointments.⁵²

Before being permitted to take the first of the qualifying examinations, Ruan Yuan, like other candidates, had to register his credentials for the examinations. He had to give the names of three immediate generations of ancestors, all male and female, and such personal information as proofs that the name he gave was indeed his true name, and that his native place was indeed Yizheng. In addition, he had to assure the authorities that he was not in mourning, did not owe taxes, nor was he a convicted criminal. He had to prove that he did not descend from anyone with an occupation that would disqualify him, such as being an entertainer or a prostitute, nor was he himself so engaged in such an endeavour. Fang Litang, the licentiate with the dangling jade spectacles, acted as his sponsor. The content of the examinations comprised the Four Books as well as other classical texts. He must have scored sufficiently high for his mother to engage Li Daonan in 1780. It is noted in *Diziji* that Ruan Yuan boarded in the Li home.

Although there is no record of Ruan Yuan ever having had to take on paid jobs while he was studying, family tradition had him working in a dyer's shop at this time, presumably as a clerk of some sort. Ruan Xixiang (阮錫岸), a direct descendant who operated a business in Taipei in the 1970s, wrote 'when my ancestor was working at the dyer's, a worker dropped the accounting journals into a vat one day. The dyer was desperate because records of all transactions were lost. My ancestor said: "Do not worry. I know what is in the books and can remember everything." Thereupon he reproduced the entire set of accounts without any mistake.'⁵³ It is possible that this story was invented subsequently in

52. *Diziji* I:5. See also Man-Cheong (2004), p. 26, p. 31.

53. Letter from Ruan Xixiang to the author, dated May 1977. This story was reiterated by Wang Yigong in Yangzhou in 1988.

order to show that Ruan Yuan had the ability of total recall. On the other hand, the tale does give credence to another family tradition that the dyer was the one who paid for Ruan Yuan's journey to Beijing to take the metropolitan examinations some years later.

While his academic skills progressed steadily during the next four years, Ruan Yuan's personal life underwent drastic changes. His mother suddenly collapsed and died in September 1781. Her death was inconsolably felt by her husband and their son. Theirs was a close-knit family, and the mother was the backbone of it. As Ruan Yuan studied and his father travelled, the mother held the family together. She not only washed the laundry but also provided intellectual and emotional support for the men. It is regrettable that this remarkable woman died at the relatively young age of forty-seven, without the satisfaction of seeing any of her only child's considerable achievements.

Was the mother domineering? She seemed to be in control of every aspect of her son's life and development. She even made sure that he made the right friends, encouraging him to associate only with those whom she considered to be upright. When his circle of friends and acquaintances began to grow as Ruan Yuan travelled away from home, she would inquire each time he returned: 'With whom did you spend your time? What did you talk about? Then she would comment on the value of each person, whether he was the kind of individual to emulate or to avoid.'⁵⁴ This was tight control indeed. On the other hand, she did not seem to have spoiled her only son. She passed to him a care for nature and for fellow human beings, including a respect for women, their intellectual and emotional well-being, in spite of his following the contemporary practice of keeping concubines.

Then, after the prescribed mourning period was over, Ruan Yuan married. A woman was needed in the house, and this was the customary way for poor families to acquire an unsalaried housekeeper. The bride, née Jiang, was a second cousin, the granddaughter of his father's maternal uncle. Nothing is known about this woman, not even her given name, except that she married Ruan Yuan in 1784 and bore him a daughter in 1787. She was given a young servant, probably in 1786 when Ruan Yuan left for Beijing to sit the metropolitan examination, as she was then expecting a child. This servant was Liu Wenru (劉文如), who was born in 1777, so would have been too young to be brought into the household any earlier. In 1794, when Liu was sixteen, she became the then widower Ruan Yuan's first concubine.

54. *YJS*/II:1.

Outside Forces Coming into Ruan Yuan's Life

Meanwhile, forces from outside Yangzhou began to enter Ruan Yuan's life as he began to take civil service examinations. Two influential scholar-officials, first Xie Yong (謝鏞 1719–95) and then Zhu Gui (朱珪 1731–1807), came to Jiangsu to supervise examinations. These two men had been tutors to Jiaqing when he was a young boy, and they now took an interest in Ruan Yuan's future. Patronage of high officials was one of the ways boys from ordinary families could come to the notice of the emperor and other officials in power. Zhu was to become the single most influential individual in the development of Ruan Yuan's intellectual perspectives and civil service career.

Zhu, a metropolitan graduate at the age of seventeen in 1748, was chosen by Qianlong himself to tutor the imperial princes. He was assigned the special responsibilities for Yongyan (顥琰 1760–1820), who was to ascend the throne as the Jiaqing Emperor in 1796. Zhu had served under Qianlong in various capital and provincial posts, and was known for his scholarship and integrity, which at that time included the criterion of being independent of Heshen (和珅 d. 1799), the corrupt Grand Councillor and holder of other high offices. After the deaths of the aged emperor and Heshen in February 1799, Zhu became one of Jiaqing's closest advisors.

Important as Zhu Gui was to the advancement of Ruan Yuan's scholarly and official career, it was Xie Yong who came upon Ruan Yuan first at this critical juncture of the young man's life. Xie was the first official of national stature to discover the young scholar. He had come to Jiangsu in 1784 as Director of Studies. He had held this post once before, from 1773 to 1777, when he discovered Wang Zhong (汪中 1745–94), a talented scholar who never became an official. Xie Yong noticed Ruan Yuan when the latter ranked fourth on the 'annual' examination in 1784, and then ranked first on the *yuan kao* (院考), thus becoming a licentiate. He was given the appointment of a subsidized government student (*linshan shengyuan* 廩膳生員), with a stipend. He was attached to the County School of Yizheng (*Yizheng Xianxue* 儀徵縣學), but basically worked on Xie Yong's staff.

Xie was identified as Ruan Yuan's 'benefactor' (*enren* 恩人) by the Jiaqing Emperor himself. In 1804, when Ruan Yuan was Governor of Zhejiang, he had privately settled a dispute involving Xie's only surviving son, instead of going through the routine of first sending a memorial to the emperor asking for instructions. The emperor was not amused. He admonished Ruan Yuan, accusing him in an edict for trying to shelter a wrong-doer. 'I know that Xie Yong was your

benefactor and that you wanted to protect his son from the course of justice,’⁵⁵ the emperor had penned. This incident shows that even the emperor had realized the importance of a patron to any future official.

Xie, whose responsibilities as provincial director of studies also included the search for talents, marvelled at Ruan Yuan’s ability to articulate his thoughts under pressure, and granted him an additional government allowance of four taels of silver a year, and six *picul* of rice each month.⁵⁶ This allowance was meant to make it easier for candidates from poor families to continue their studies for further examinations. Xie also invited Ruan Yuan to join his staff, travelling with him throughout the provinces to read examination papers. At the same time, as a licentiate, Ruan Yuan enjoyed exemption from the land tax, the draft, corporal punishment, and having to prostrate to the magistrate. In addition, the positioning of his front gate could be three *chun* (寸) higher than those of the residences of the ordinary populace.

The next level in the civil service examination ladder was the provincial examination. At this level the examinations were supervised by two capital officials, appointed by the emperor and seconded to the Board of Rites, but the Provincial Director of studies was to participate in the oral interviews of the candidates. The provincial examinations for Jiangnan (Jiangsu and Anhui) were held at Nanjing. There were three sessions of three days each. Ruan Yuan took his examinations from 24 September to 7 October 1786. Successful candidates, whose names were made known to the Governor of the province after an interval of half a month to three weeks, were invited to attend a banquet, known as the Banquet of the Bleating Deer (Luming yan 鹿鳴宴). Generally speaking, all provincial graduates enjoyed social privileges accorded to officials of the seventh rank even if they did not go on to pass the metropolitan examination.

In 1786 Ruan Yuan passed the provincial examination, ranking first, thus becoming a provincial graduate. To take this examination, a candidate had to be ‘excellent in the classics and perfect in conduct’.⁵⁷ In addition to the written papers, each candidate who passed had to go through a personal interview by the examination officials. This oral examination was to make sure that the candidate had not cheated on the written examination, and that the essays he

55. *Tonghua Lu* (東華錄), Jiaqing reign I:6:23.

56. Shang Yanliu (商衍鑒), *Qingdai Keju Kaoshi Shulu* (清代科舉考試述錄) [Examination system of the Qing dynasty], p. 18. A brief account written for the general readers by Shang, whose name given as Sheang Yen-liu, translated into English by Ellen Klempner, ‘Memories of the Chinese Imperial Civil Service Examination System’, can be found in *American Asian Review* 3: 1 (1985), pp. 48–83. See also Chang Chung-li, *The Chinese Gentry* (1955).

57. Chang, *Chinese Gentry*, p. 27, note 102.

submitted were truly his own. The chief Examiner for Ruan Yuan was Zhu Gui. Like Xie Yong, Zhu Gui was impressed by the Ruan Yuan's ability to handle himself under pressure. Zhu and Xie had known each other when they were tutors at the Imperial School (Shang Shufang 上書房), and now they discussed this promising young scholar. Ruan Yuan at twenty-two *sui* must have been a poised young man with self-effacing manners. He seemed to have been liked by all who met him. As Xie's term of office in Jiangsu was coming to a close, he offered to have Ruan Yuan travel to Beijing in his entourage.

Financing the journey and his sojourn in Beijing presented a serious problem for Ruan Yuan. There is no evidence that his father had established himself by then. Ruan Yuan's wife was expecting a child. The Ruan clan did not have the tradition of subsidizing the travelling and living expenses of its members, not to mention support for families the candidates were leaving behind.⁵⁸ The government allowance for a candidate travelling to the capital from Jiangsu to take the metropolitan examination was only five taels.⁵⁹ It was likely that friends like Fang Litang of the dangling-jade spectacles helped, but, according to tradition passed down through the Ruan descendants, the dyer was the one who came to the rescue by underwriting the lion's share of the expenses.⁶⁰

Later, Ruan Yuan was to make certain that a fund was established to aid the candidates' travelling expenses by collecting rents from specified fields and shops. The Yangzhou Hostel in Beijing was to be assured of support from contributions by officials of the third rank and above from that locality. In addition, as a result of Ruan Yuan's efforts, the Yangzhou salt merchants were assessed three thousand taels each annually to subsidize living expenses in Beijing of examination candidates and capital officials from the area who could not afford the three *qian* (錢) per month rent at the hostel.⁶¹

58. Apparently Ruan Yuan did appeal to the clan for financial assistance at this point. Nasty words created so much ill feeling that Ruan Yuan refused to adopt the name of the Ruan clan hall in the northern part of Yangzhou, Deli Tang (德里堂), for his use after he became successful. Family tradition relates that the clan elders had remarked to Ruan Yuan: 'How can you possibly imagine that there would be the slightest chance for you to pass the metropolitan examination?' 'Even if you did, we would not want to share any of your reflected glory.' The truth of this claim may be reflected in the fact that only one uncle was recommended by Ruan Yuan for imperial honours although his father had three half-brothers and a large number of cousins. *YJS* II:1.

59. *Qinding Da Qin Huidian* (欽定大清會典) (Guangxu edition). A regulation dated 1651 is cited in Yang Liangsheng (楊聯陞), 'Keju Shidai di Fukao Lufei Wenti' (科舉時代的附考旅費問題), *Tsinghua Journal*, new series II:2 (1961), p. 116.

60. Letter from Ruan Xixiang.

61. Yang Liansheng, p. 126.

Concluding Comments

Ruan Yuan's rise from a humble background in the outskirts of Yangzhou to the high level of officialdom and scholarship, through the route of the civil service examination system, embodied the dream entertained by Chinese boys and their families since ancient times. Although the Ruan family had been classified as gentry, their lifestyle was closer to that of the peasants. Money was always scarce. Ruan Yuan had a better-than-average chance at success for several reasons. He was bright and hardworking. His mother was enlightened and understanding, and was able to support her son intellectually as well as emotionally. Above all, it was his extraordinary fortune that Zhu Gui, who had discovered him at the right time, was to be in Beijing where he introduced Ruan Yuan to the scholars of the School of Han Learning and influential officials at the Jiaqing court. At the time he left Yangzhou to take the metropolitan examination in Beijing in 1786, however, his future was by no means certain, although, like all such candidates, he must have harboured high aspirations.

2

Intellectual Foundations and Political Beginnings: Beijing, 1786–93

It was during this period of Ruan Yuan's sojourn in Beijing as a candidate for the metropolitan examinations that the direction for his intellectual development and political future was set. As a young man from an obscure background without independent financial means, Ruan Yuan was distinguishable from other candidates only because he had the patronage of Zhu Gui. Zhu Gui, already an acknowledged leader in the world of intellectuals in 1786, was to become a powerful political figure after the death of Qianlong in February 1799, when his pupil, Jiaqing, assumed the control of the court and the government. Despite differences of almost thirty years in age, a close friendship developed between Zhu Gui and Ruan Yuan. This friendship was to last until Zhu's death in 1807, when Ruan Yuan's career was already launched. In the winter of 1786–7, Zhu Gui took over from Xie Yong as patron to the young candidate, taking his education in hand as he later charted the course of his political career. Ruan Yuan was placed in a hostel just inside the Qianmen Gate (前門), in a sector which controlled the entrance to the Inner City from the suburbs.¹ Therefore, from the very outset, Ruan Yuan lived at a location with more convenient access to offices in the Forbidden City, such as the Imperial Study.

Passing the Time

A few months after he arrived in Beijing in 1786 Ruan Yuan registered for the Metropolitan Examination. It is not clear whether inadequate preparation, poor timing, or his preoccupation with matters not immediately connected with the examination was the cause, he failed the metropolitan examination on his first try. Evidently it was felt that perhaps the examiners knew Ruan Yuan's handwriting, and were bending backwards not to give him high grades in order to avoid charges

1. *Diziji* 1.

of favouritism. Perhaps this was one reason for his closeting himself at the home of a classmate, Liu Huanzhi (劉鑾之 d. 1822),² practising to change his handwriting to rid it of distinguishing characteristics. Since the next metropolitan examination was not to take place for three years, Ruan Yuan had an extended stay in the capital, during which his intellectual horizon broadened while future political connections were cemented.

There is no written record on how Ruan Yuan managed to keep himself or where he was living. Zhaolin seemed to imply that he was spending a great deal of time at Zhu Gui's residence. Reading late one night, Zhu came upon a rare work. 'Superb!' he exclaimed excitedly. He roused Ruan Yuan from a deep slumber, rushed him to light candles and mark the passage. 'Here! There! Mark these passages! My eyes are old and tired. You can make yourself useful by marking these passages!'³ This incident, if it indeed took place, revealed the deep friendship between the two men, sharing the exciting experience of intellectual discovery, even if it meant being awakened from a deep sleep. Being around the Han Learning scholars at the Zhu brothers could not have hurt Ruan Yuan's chances. Although he spent some time seriously trying to change the appearance of his handwriting, being 'connected with those likely to serve as examiners and so well attuned to scholarly trends in the capital'⁴ could not possibly hurt a candidate.

Ruan Yuan's closeness with younger members of the Zhu clan was also evident. There is extant a letter addressed to 'Number Eleven Elder Brother Shaobai (Shaobai shiyi xiong 少白十一兄)'. The letter, in the collection of Dr Wang Shih-chieh (王世杰 1890–1980), is now on deposit at the National Palace Museum.⁵ Dr Wang had asked Hu Shi about the letter. Hu Shi wrote that he had seen the bunch of letters in Dr Wang's collection and found them extremely

2. Fang Chao-ying, biography of Liu Tongxun, in *ECPP*, pp. 533–534. Liu Huanzhi ranked twenty-second out of sixty-two, in the third group of the 1789 class of metropolitan graduates. He was appointed to the Hanlin Academy nevertheless since his family was prominent politically. He was a grandson of Liu Tongxun (劉統勳 1700–73) and a nephew of Liu Yong (劉墉 1720–1805), both high officials in the Qianlong era. Liu Huanzhi rose to the presidency of the Board of Revenue (1814–17) and the Board of Civil Service (1820–2). One of his sons, Liu Xihai (劉星海 d. 1853), was a well-known calligrapher and epigraphy expert.

3. Zhaolian, *Xiaoting Zalu* 4:11b.

4. R. Kent Guy, p. 52.

5. A catalogue of Dr Wang's collection was compiled by the Museum in 1988. *Wang Xueting Xiansheng Xucun Wenwu Tulu* (王雪艇先生續存文物圖錄). Xueting was Dr Wang's *hao*. Dr Wang served as Foreign Minister of the Chinese government during the Sino-Japanese War. He was the founder of the University of Wuhan, served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Palace Museum, and President of the Academia Sinica. Wang catalogue, p. 166.

interesting. These letters had come from the estate of Zhu Gui. The addressee Shaobai was Zhu Xigeng (朱錫庚 b. 1762), a nephew of Zhu Gui. The letter, the date of which can be ascertained from the content, reveals Ruan Yuan's state of mind at that time.

My disappointment was especially keen because my (not passing the examination) was so unexpected. I am totally undone. I am not just uttering words, I am truly upset. It is not only my own future, but, because of my carelessness, I have wasted all my years of studying. I am so ashamed, and am full of remorse. However, there is nothing I can do about it now. I am going to the Imperial Study tomorrow, leaving around three o'clock, or just a little after. I will pass by your house, so will stop to see you. There is no need for you to bestir yourself by coming to see me.⁶

Another undated letter shows further the informal and friendly relationship between Ruan Yuan and the Zhu clan.

It is good to learn of your being on the list awaiting appointments. At least it means that you will have some leisurely time ... I have a cart you can use for the time being, but you need to out fit it with a set of second-hand wheels.⁷

He continued meeting new people and exploring new areas of interest. His first major work on the classics, a technical study on the specifications and construction of certain vehicles described in the sixth chapter of the *Zhou li* (周禮 *Institute of Zhou*), illustrated with diagrams, *Kaogong Ji Juzhi Tujie* (考工記車制圖解), was completed in 1788.⁸ His first child, a daughter he named Quan (荃), was born in Yangzhou the year before.

Introduction to Han Learning

The Emperor's Four Treasuries

Ruan Yuan's arrival in Beijing at that time turned out to be propitious, for many of the scholars working on the *Emperor's Four Treasuries* (*Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書) were still in the capital, gathered around Zhu Gui and his brother, Zhu Yun (朱筠 1729–81). Zhu Gui made sure that Ruan Yuan was to take advantage of their knowledge and benefit from their association and guidance. The *Four Treasuries*,

6. The letter from Hu Shi is on Wang catalogue, p. 185.

7. Wang catalogue, p. 174.

8. Benjamin Elman described the title of this work as 'Explications using diagrams of the design of wheeled carriages in the "Record of Technology" by reconstructing "the ancient dimensions of vehicles"', in *From Philosophy to Philology* (2001), pp. 219–21.

the great imperial manuscript library, comprising copies of all books considered worth preserving by the contemporary scholar-officials around the emperor, was compiled in the style of the Ming Encyclopaedia, *Yongle Dadian* (永樂大典), and with the latest perspective of Han Learning scholarship.⁹ A bureau of four to five thousand workers was established for the compilation project, including 362 editors (in 1777), proofreaders, record keepers, binders, box-makers, and carvers.¹⁰ The original handwritten set of the library, comprising 3,457 works in 79,070 *juan* bound in 36,000 volumes (*ce* 冊), was finished in 1785. The original manuscript copy was deposited at the Forbidden City in Beijing. Three more manuscript copies were made in 1788 for the imperial palaces in Fengtian (奉天) (Shenyang 沈陽) and Jehol (熱河), and the Hanlin Academy. Then three more manuscript copies were made for deposit at libraries in Hangzhou, Zhenjiang and Yangzhou. In theory, Ruan Yuan had access to the copies at the Forbidden City and the Hanlin Academy during this period he was in Beijing, and later those in Hangzhou, Zhenjiang, and Yangzhou as well. In fact, however, as Ruan Kuisheng (阮葵生) wrote in his *Chayu Kehua* (茶餘客話), ‘When you are a low-level official at the Grand Secretariat, you do not just saunter over to the Imperial Library and take a look at the *Four Treasuries*.’¹¹

9. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology* (1984), p. 64.

10. Recent scholarly studies on the *Four Treasuries* in Chinese include: Huang Aiping (黃愛平), *Siku Quanshu Zuanxiu Yanjiu* (四庫全書纂修研究) (1989); Wu Che-fu (吳哲夫), *Siku Quanshu Huiyao Zuanxiu kao* (四庫全書薈要纂修考) (1976). Both these works made extensive use of the extant Qing archival documents in Beijing and Taipei, respectively. Furthermore, there is Wu’s ‘Siku Quanshu Xiuli Chu Gongzuo Renyuan Zhili Yu Guanli’ (四庫全書修理處工作人員治理與管理), *Youshi Monthly* (幼獅月刊), 46:5 (1977), pp. 28–33. The 362 editors listed also included officials whose positions entitled their names to be among the compilers, but who did not necessarily work on the literary aspects of the project. In May 1998, there was a conference on the *Four Treasuries* in Taipei. Scholars from the two shores of the Taiwan Strait, including Hong Kong, were invited to present papers. Fourteen articles have been published in the conference proceedings, *Liangan Siku Xue* (兩岸四庫學) (1998). In this volume is my contribution to the conference (四庫全書纂修外一章：阮元如何提挈與促進嘉道時代的學術研究), pp. 1–54.

11. Ruan Kuisheng’s work is reprinted in *Qingdai Xiaoshuo Bijì Xuan* (清代小說筆記選), compiled by Jiang Yujing (江畚經) (1972), p. 511. Apparently the texts of the copies were not totally alike. At first a printed edition was made at the Imperial Bindery (Wuying Dian 武英殿) from the Forbidden City copy, and later from other copies as well. When the Zhejiang (Hangzhou) copy was printed in 1795, the prologue gave credit to a host of officials in the province as sponsors of this edition, but without Ruan Yuan who was Director of Studies 1795–8. The epilogue of this edition, however, was written by Ruan Yuan. The issue on Ruan’s role as far as this particular printing was concerned has been a topic of scholarly debate since that time, especially as some of the text in this Zhejiang printed edition differed somewhat from the Imperial Bindery edition. Chang P’e-de (昌彼得),

Scholars around the Zhu Brothers

Contemporary scholars in China and Japan already recognized the importance of the circle around the Zhu brothers. In English, R. Kent Guy called attention to the circle in his discourse on the *Four Treasuries*.¹² The Zhu family had been prominent intellectuals in Beijing ever since their grandfather decided to retire in the capital and brought up his sons and grandsons surrounded by learned individuals. The younger brother, Zhu Gui, might have attracted scholars due to his political clout, it was Zhu Yun who first gathered scholars around him when he was Director of Studies in Anhui (1771–3). Zhu Yun was a member of ‘one of the most distinguished *jinshi* classes in the 18th century’,¹³ which had included such well-known scholars as Ji Yun (紀昀 1724–1805), who was to be editor-in-chief of the *Four Treasuries* project, the historian Qian Daxin (錢大昕 1728–1804) and the classicist Wang Chang (王昶 1725–1806). Into this circle were to come Bi Yuan (畢沅 1730–97) and Ruan Yuan, both to rise to major offices in the provinces where they were to create circles of scholars of their own. Through patronage of scholarship, Guy observes that, ‘life in these circles illustrated some of the ways in which Chinese intellectuals adapted themselves to the political and economic realities’¹⁴ of their time. In time Ruan Yuan was to evolve into one of the most important scholars and patrons of learning of the Qing dynasty. Meanwhile, as a candidate for the metropolitan examination and a very junior scholar in the Zhu circle, he was to become acquainted with the lifestyle of a sophisticated scholarly group in a most supportive and convivial environment at the Zhu brothers. He was also to become familiar with the ideas and methodology of the School of Han Learning of Dai Zhen (戴震 1724–77).

Qing Scholarship and Learning

In a review article published in 1980, Yu Ying-shi (余英時), a prominent historian of Qing learning, observed that ‘[B]y late Ming times, political and social decadence had reached such a degree that it was no longer possible to contain

retired Deputy Director of the National Palace Museum in Taipei and a recognized authority on Chinese rare book editions, gave the opinion that when the printing first began Ruan had not yet arrived in Hangzhou, but, as he was in Beijing when the Wuying Dian edition was completed, he was aware of its shortcomings, so had made changes in the Zhejiang edition. Conversations with Mr Chang, 1976–99.

12. R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries* (1987), p. 49.

13. Guy, p. 50.

14. Guy, p. 52.

the Confucian impulse to reorder the world in the realm of ideas.¹⁵ After the fall of the dynasty and the establishment of the Qing in the seventeenth century, scholarship development went in different directions. Bypassing or rejecting Tang, Song and Ming scholarship, Qing scholars looked to texts of the more ancient past, Han dynasty or earlier, as a basis for learning.

This divergence of approach to classical scholarship became known as the Han-Song Controversy, an important turning point in Qing intellectual history. Twentieth-century intellectual historians viewed the controversy as significant. R. Kent Guy saw that the

essential differences between the two schools was over the concept of truth, and how it was to be verified. For both Han and Song learning thinkers, the ancient sages were, of course, the ultimate sources of philosophical and moral wisdom. But for Han learning, that wisdom was to be found in and verified by texts, while for Song learning the truth was a matter of judgment and understanding, more often experienced than documented.¹⁶

Benjamin A. Elman, quoting Yu Yingshi, saw ‘this Han-Song controversy as one of the most significant features of Ch’ing (Qing) thought, and, as Yu has pointed out, “became the conceptual starting point of various modern interpretations of Ch’ing intellectual history.”’¹⁷

Dai Zhen and the School of Han Learning

Han Learning scholars were the dominant group of intellectuals in the mid-Qing era, although they were not to influence the education and examination system until the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, at the ‘twilight of Confucian thought’,¹⁸ scholars had sought to overcome the extreme objectivism and idealism of the School of Song Learning (*Songxue* 宋學) to extend their research to include scholarship of the Han dynasty, or even earlier, as a guide to studying the Classics. The intellectual rebellion against Song Learning began during the seventeenth century, when such scholars as Gu Yanwu (顧炎武 1613–82) searched for a means to bypass the metaphysical speculations inherent in Song and Ming scholarship,

15. Yu Ying-shih, ‘Review Article: Toward an Interpretation of the Intellectual Transition in Seventeenth-Century China’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 100: 3 (July–October 1980), p. 118. Yu was reviewing *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary.

16. Guy, p. 145.

17. Yu Ying-shih, *Qinghua Journal of Chinese Studies* 11 (1975), p. 111.

18. Wm. Theodore deBary, *Chinese Tradition* (1964 edition), p. 557.

which, in their opinion, had lacked intellectual depth. 'Although Gu himself was not a Han Learning scholar, he set the foundation for what was to develop into a system of research and learning.'¹⁹ Instead, scholars of the Han Learning School offered an inductive method of research. They also advocated clarity of language, and sought to expand the scope of learning to embrace historical and textual criticism, phonetics, and etymology. 'In this process the Han Schoolmen made contributions of lasting value to our knowledge of the Confucian Classics.'²⁰ Or, in the words of Yu Ying-shi, 'the intellectual transition of seventeenth-century Neo-Confucianism eventually landed in what is commonly called *k'ao-cheng* of the Ch'ing (Qing) period, which stressed, among other things, philological explications of classical texts',²¹ subsequently identified with Dai Zhen.

F. W. Mote added his commentary on the topic:

Evidential research (*kaozheng xue* 考證學) became so powerful a movement in intellectual life that it established the agenda for all scholarly activity. A consequence was the reordering of the debate between the Song dynasty 'rationalism' of the dominant Cheng-Zhu (*lixue* 禮學) tradition and the idealism (*xinxue* 性學) of the Song and Ming Lu-Wang tradition ... Evidential research repudiated scholarly trends of the entire Neo-Confucian era, looking beyond the Song dynasty, father back into antiquity to the Han dynasty for its models. Critical thinking was no longer restricted to the old arena of debate.²²

During the Qianlong era, the leading scholar of the School of Han Learning was Dai Zhen. The Guangxu era reformer and twentieth-century intellectual historian, Liang Qichao (梁啟超 1873–1929), perhaps throwing caution to the winds, claimed that Dai was 'probably the most original thinker among the scholars of the dynasty, without whom Qing learning perhaps could not have established itself so eminently'.²³ Whereas Dai had developed a philosophy of his own, the exponents of his ideas, including Ruan Yuan, only 'carried on Dai's thoughts in part (failing) to stress certain essentials'.²⁴ In addition, influential scholars of that time had taken to exercise censorship in selecting works by Dai for printing after his death in 1777. Liang had quoted Ruan Yuan's contemporary,

19. Wang Junyi (王俊義) and Huang Aiping, *Qingdai Xueshu yu Wenhua* (清代學術與文化) (1993), pp. 275–6.

20. DeBary, p. 558. See also Wang Jiajian (王家儉), *Qingshi Yanjiu Lunsou* (清史研究論叢) (1994), pp. 88–113.

21. Yu (1975), p. 120. Citing William S. Atwell, 'From Education to Politics: The Fu She', from *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*.

22. F. W. Mote, *Imperial China 900–1800* (1999), p. 931.

23. Fang Chao-ying, Biography of Tai Chen (Dai Zhen), in *ECCP*, p. 699.

24. Fang, Biography of Tai Chen, in *ECCP*, p. 699.

Jiang Fan (江藩 1761–1831) who revealed in his biography of Dai that Zhu Gui (or Zhu Yun) had removed an essay by Dai selected for inclusion in a collection of Dai's works by his son. In doing so, Zhu had commented that 'this (item) need not be included. The work of Dai that is worthy to be handed down is not this piece ...'²⁵

As a result, Dai's philosophy did not endure in its entirety much beyond his lifetime. His only important contribution to learning was his application of the empirical method developed by earlier Qing scholars, combining critical and thorough investigations into the classics, and in broadening the areas of research to include philology, phonology, historical geography, astronomy, and mathematical history. As an integral part of this systematic search for truth, Dai had demanded that all knowledge be supported by evidence, and insisted upon understanding words in their original meaning as a prerequisite to the comprehension of texts. This premise became the principle of the textual criticism (*kaozheng xue* 考證學) scholarship of the time, a central focus of the School of Han Learning. As a result of the labours of the Han Learning scholars, there emerged a body of knowledge to which Ruan Yuan was to make important contributions, both as a scholar himself and as a patron to other scholars. Ruan Yuan 'was to use Dai's ideas and methods ... in returning the classics to their original interpretations'.²⁶

Ruan Yuan never met Dai personally. He came to know Dai's ideas and methodology through Shao Jinhan (邵晉涵 1743–96) and Wang Niansun (王念孫 1744–1832) who had worked closely with Dai. When Dai was in Yangzhou serving on the staff of the Salt Administration in 1757, Ruan Yuan was not yet born.²⁷ When Ruan Yuan arrived in Beijing in 1786, Dai had been dead for almost ten years. It was Shao Jinhan and Wang Niansun, who, more than anyone else, opened Ruan Yuan's mind to the exciting new vistas of the School of Han Learning (*Hanxue* 漢學).²⁸ They saw each other daily, books in hand, questioning and discussing each passage and each word with excitement.²⁹

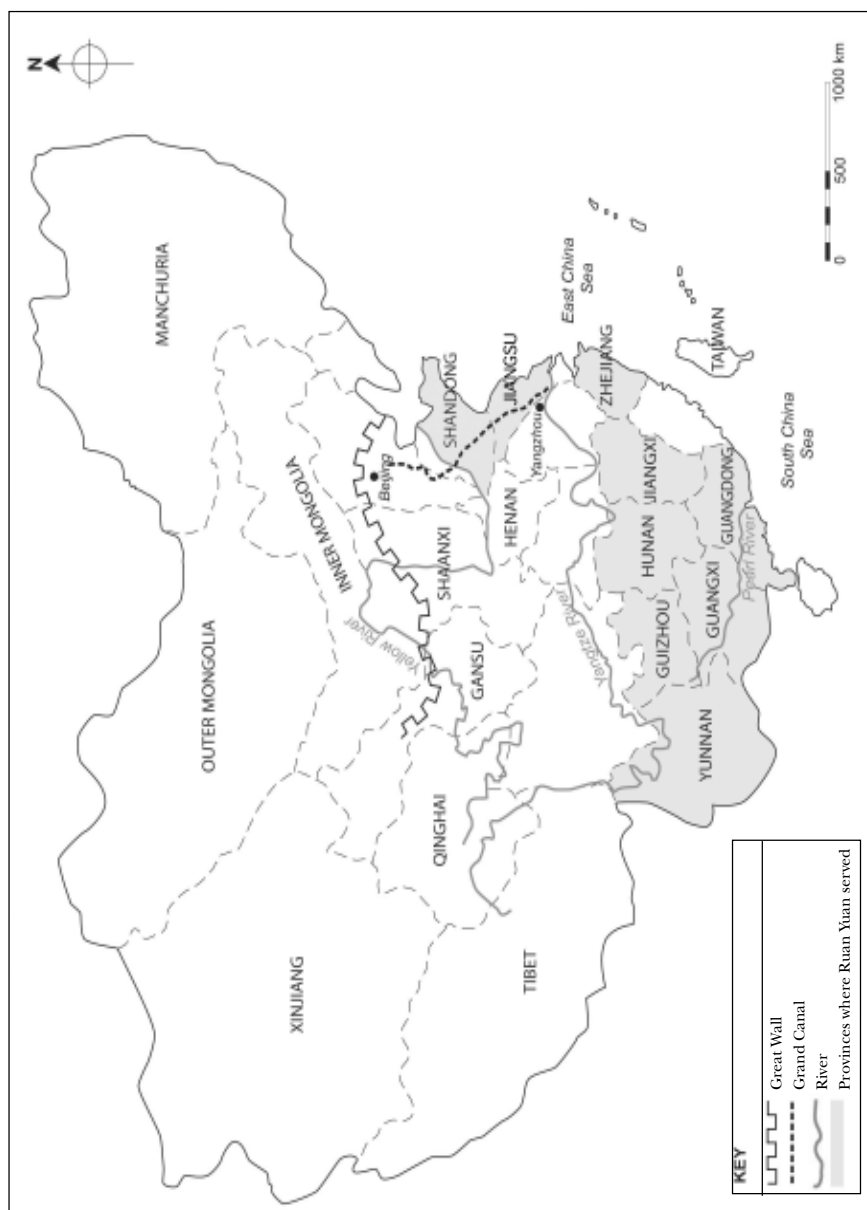
25. Liang Qichao, *Qingdai Xueshu Gailun* (清代學術概論) (1977), p. 69. Wang Junyi (王俊義) and Huang Aiping, on the other hand, give convincing evidence to show that it was Zhu Yun who gave the order to Dai's son to remove the essay; see Wang and Huang, *Qingdai Xueshu yu Wenhua* (清代學術與文化) (1999), p. 293. This information is not in Jiang Fan's biography of Dai Zhen, which is in *juan* 5, not *juan* 6 as stated by Liang.

26. Hu Shi (胡適), *Dai Dongyuan de zhexue* (戴東原的哲學) [The philosophy of Dan Zhen] (Taipei: Yuanliu, 1986), p. 139.

27. Dai had served as a tutor to Wang Niansun, but in Beijing, not in Yangzhou. He was in Yangzhou in the office of Lu Chien-tseng (盧見曾 1690–1708), who was chief salt commissioner of Liang Hui. See Tu Lien-che, Biography of Lu, *ECCP*, p. 542.

28. Qian Mu (錢穆), *Zhongguo Jin Sanbainian Xueshu Shi* (中國近三百年學術史) (Taipei) 2, p. 479.

29. *Diziji* 1:7a–b.



Map 2.1 China circa 1800: Showing provinces and cities associated with Ruan Yuan

Shao was a metropolitan graduate of 1771, and had known Dai when they both worked at the Bureau for the Compilation of the *Four Treasuries*. Shao was assigned to the Bureau as an assistant editor in charge of works in the category of history. The fact that he was only twenty-eight *sui* at that time testified to the respect accorded to his knowledge and scholarship by more established scholar officials. He had served on the staff of Zhu Yun and was a good friend of the scholar Zhang Xuecheng (章學誠 1739–1801) with whom he held lively and constant discussions on history both in person and in writing. Shao's interest in the past extended beyond the general history of the Song and the Ming eras, in which he was an acknowledged expert, into local history as well. In 1777–8, while at home in Zhejiang observing the period of mourning after his father's death, he assisted in the compilation of two local gazetteers.³⁰ He was also known for his expertise on the *Erya* (爾雅), a dictionary giving the pronunciations and meanings of words, believed to have been compiled during the Early Han.³¹ Ruan Yuan was to inherit their interests in epigraphy and the *Erya*.

Wang Niansun and his son Wang Yinzhì, from Jiangdu (江都) of the Yangzhou Prefecture, were known to Qing intellectual historians as the 'Two Wangs'. They became two of the most influential Han Learning scholars of the Qing dynasty.³² The son was Ruan Yuan's contemporary in age. The father was one of the foremost exponents of the ideas and methodology of Dai Zhen, especially Dai's empirical method and insistence on accuracy of details in conducting research in the field of phonetics and etymology. Ruan Yuan was to praise the Wangs in lavish terms, giving them credit for correcting certain errors in pronunciation and meaning of words that had been in existence a long time, and making it possible for contemporary scholars to rediscover the thoughts of ancient writers. Ruan wrote,

All the interpretations of ancient scholars were (re-examined on the basis of) extensive citations and abstruse parallels, in order to arrive (at the original) meaning. If the ancient sages and wise men could see this effort, they would smile and exclaim: 'These are indeed my words; the misinterpretations of several thousands years have now been rectified.'³³

30. *Hangzhou Fuzhi* (杭州府志) [The Gazetteer of the Prefecture of Hangzhou] in 1777 and Yuyao Xianzhi (餘姚縣志) [*The Local Gazetteer of Yuyao*] in 1778.

31. A question on the authenticity of this date was raised by Professor Kung-chuen Hsiao in *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, vol. 1, translated into English by F. W. Mote (1979), p. 729.

32. Wang and Huang, *Qingdai Xueshu*, p. 306.

33. Preface by Ruan Yuan to *Jingyi Shuwen* (經義述文), a work compiled by the son but contained essays by the father, second edition printed in 1817 under the aegis of Ruan Yuan, then Governor of Jiangxi.

Liang, who had been a student at the Xuehaitang (學海堂) in Canton, which incidentally was founded by Ruan Yuan, later pronounced that Ruan Yuan had not overexaggerated in praising the Wang efforts. Liang wrote that ‘since even today when we read works by the Wangs, father and son, we cannot help but feel that every one of their points is clearly evident to our minds that our old misunderstanding melts away on the spot, like ice’.³⁴ Late twentieth-century scholars, Wang Junyi and Huang Aiping of the Qing History Institute of the People’s University in Beijing, on the other hand, consider the Wangs to be too anxious in their efforts looking for ‘mistakes’ where none had existed. They think that the Wangs, both father and son, sometimes saw a different word or phrase used by scholars throughout the ages to interpret a particular word or phrase of the Classics as a ‘mistake’.³⁵

Future Compiler of Literary Projects

Inculcated with the conviction that there must be accuracy in details as well as the variety of interest in all areas of research, Ruan Yuan was to proceed to complete projects begun or suggested by Dai Zhen and his contemporary scholars. In phonology and etymology, for instance, he organized the compilation of *Dictionary for the Classics* (*Jingji Zuangu* 經籍纂詁) when he was Director of Studies in Zhejiang in 1796–7. ‘The proposal for compilation of this work had originated from Dai Zhen.’³⁶ A thesaurus of classical terms and phrases, *Jing Fu* (經郛), was also compiled under the aegis of Ruan Yuan, but, owing to disputes over some basic interpretations among scholars working on it that Ruan did not have time to reconcile, the work was never printed.³⁷ In addition, Ruan Yuan continued Dai’s efforts in recovering ancient works on mathematics that for centuries had been neglected. Ruan Yuan’s *Biographies of Mathematicians and Astronomers* (*Chouren Zhuan* 畴人傳) presented the lives and summaries of the works of 280 Chinese and Western mathematicians and astronomers in chronological sequence, providing materials for a systematic history of mathematics and its related field, astronomy.³⁸

34. Liang Qichao, *Intellectual Trends*, p. 65.

35. Wang and Huang, *Qingdai Xueshu*, pp. 340–1.

36. Qian Mu, p. 479.

37. *Diziji* 7:1.

38. Although Ruan Yuan’s preface to this work was dated 1797 (incidentally a source of misinformation for certain scholars interested in this field), it was not compiled when Ruan Yuan was Director of Studies in Zhejiang. The idea for compilation of this work was advanced at that time, with Ruan Yuan attributing the original concept to Li Rui (李瑞), Qian Daxin, Jiao Xun, and Ling Dingkan. The bulk of the actual research and writing, however, was not completed until 1809–10, when Ruan Yuan was at the State Historiography office in Beijing.

In pursuance to his studies of antiquity, Ruan Yuan became interested in ancient orthography and epigraphy. He developed an expertise especially in epigraphy, the study of inscriptions carved on the ancient bronze vessels and on stone. This interest was to be nurtured further when his official assignments brought him to Shandong and Zhejiang, two provinces rich in ancient sites as well as historical and literary traditions. Xie Yong had introduced Ruan Yuan to Bi Yuan, who encouraged and facilitated these interests in 1793–95. With Bi's guidance, Ruan Yuan compiled *Epigraphic Texts of Shandong* (*Shanzuo Jinshi Zhi* 山左金石志), a study of stone inscriptions found in the province of Shandong. He was to organize a similar project in Zhejiang a few years later, *Epigraphic Texts in Zhejiang* (*Liangzhe Jinshi Zhi* 兩浙金石志).

Zhang Xuecheng sparked in Ruan Yuan an enthusiasm in ancient bronzes and rare books. The two men had met through Shao Jinhan in Beijing. When Ruan Yuan was Director of Studies in Zhejiang, he received a letter from Zhang on collecting rare books in the province. Zhang wrote that in the past 'there were many libraries in Chekiang (Zhejiang) and a strong historical tradition; many of the scholars who worked on the Yuan and Ming histories came from this area, and there were better historical collections here than elsewhere. But all is scattered and lost!'³⁹ Ruan Yuan heeded to Zhang's advice by encouraging and cajoling private individuals to preserve and catalogue their collections of rare books. The best known of these collections was the one that had belonged to several generations of the Fan (范) family of Ningbo, the noted Tianyige (天一閣) Library. Ruan Yuan also collected books that had not been included in the *Four Treasuries* and sent them to Beijing.

Future Patronage of Learning

It was also at that time when Ruan Yuan was in Beijing as an examination candidate and later as a young Hanlin bachelor that he first became aware of the possibilities for officials to advance scholarship and learning by supporting research and publishing the results. With renewed interest in research, there were exchanges of ideas and findings among scholars, generating an atmosphere of the excitement of discovery. Scholar-officials who had government responsibilities did not have time for such pursuits themselves, but there were other scholars without offices who could undertake the actual research and writing under the aegis of the patron officials. In association with these scholars that included 'expectant officials, learned scholars, lawyers, mathematicians, astronomers, and

39. *Diziji* 7:1.

machinists'⁴⁰ around the Zhu brothers, Ruan Yuan realized that by having on hand a number of scholars sharing similar interests, the official could concentrate on his government responsibilities without giving up entirely his scholarly pursuits.

During his years in Beijing, therefore, Ruan Yuan's intellectual horizons expanded. His government offices in the provinces provided him further opportunities to develop these interests. For the time being, however, it was his knowledge of astronomy that gave Ruan Yuan the most tangible reward and immediate satisfaction. One man who happened to share this interest in astronomy at that moment was the reigning Qianlong Emperor, and the topic for one of the most crucial examinations Ruan Yuan had to take in 1789 involved knowledge in astronomy.

The Captial Examinations

The Metropolitan Graduates

The metropolitan graduates, the *jinshi* (進士), scholars who passed the series of examinations held in Beijing every three years or on special occasions and who had been presented to the emperor in person, represented the most elite group in traditional Chinese society. In theory, wrote Chang Chung-li in his study on the Chinese gentry, the metropolitan graduates 'generally held the highest social positions and enjoyed the greatest prestige and influence among the privileged gentry. Holding this degree, they had direct access to officialdom and were normally given immediate official appointments.'⁴¹ In fact, however, as time went on there were more metropolitan degree holders than there were official openings, a majority of them had to wait for years before obtaining appointments, and many of them had to find jobs outside the official hierarchy.⁴²

Despite this bleak reality, all students in China still aimed at attaining the metropolitan graduate status, even if at the end of years of study and preparation there was no official rainbow. Also in theory, all provincial graduates, except for those who had not paid their taxes or who had been disqualified for other reasons, were eligible to take the metropolitan examinations.⁴³ In practice, however,

40. Kenneth E Folsom, *Friends, Guests, and Colleagues* (1968), p. 73.

41. Chang Chung-li, *Chinese Gentry* (1955), p. 26.

42. Chang, *Chinese Gentry*, pp. 116–8.

43. Chang, *Chinese Gentry*, p. 26. See note 96. *Juren* who owed taxes, who were deprived of the status because they had committed certain offences, and who were under a temporary suspension of the privilege of participating in a higher-level examination, were prohibited from taking the metropolitan examinations.

because these examinations were held in the capital and only at certain specified times and during certain years, relatively few candidates took them. The quota based on geographic distribution further limited the number of scholars who could realistically attain to the status of a metropolitan graduate.⁴⁴ Several avenues were open to these scholars who did not pass the metropolitan examination. Already provincial graduates, they were eligible for certain appointments. They could teach, or join the staff of a high official.

The Metropolitan Examination

What has been translated into English as the Metropolitan Examination actually comprised a series of three or sometimes four examinations for those who passed the first of the series. All candidates who gathered in Beijing took the metropolitan examination (*huishi* 會試), literally meaning the examination at which provincial graduates from all over the empire gathered. This examination took place in the Examination Hall of Beijing (Shuntian Gongyuan 順天貢院) at the beginning of the third month every three years, with candidates living and writing in cubicles as they did in the annual and provincial examinations. The Chief Examiner (*huishi zongcai* 會試總裁) and the Deputy Chief Examiner (*fu zongcai* 副總裁), appointed by the emperor, had to be themselves high ranking metropolitan graduates.⁴⁵ The Chief Examiner in 1789 was Wang Jie (王杰 1725–1805), later a Grand Secretary and Grand Councillor who was to work closely with Zhu Gui after the Jiaqing Emperor's assumption of the government machinery.

There were three sessions of metropolitan examinations of three days each, with two three-day recesses between the sessions.⁴⁶ On the first day the candidates received the topics from the examiners, and on the third day they handed in their essays. Every effort was made to prevent cheating on the metropolitan examination. Before being allowed into the examination cubicles, the candidates were thoroughly searched. The papers were sealed and coded as in the lower-level examinations so that the names of the candidates were hidden. The format of the metropolitan examination was similar to that of the provincial examination, except that the standards had to be higher. Quotations from various texts were given as topics, and candidates composed essays based on these quotations and from their knowledge of historical scholarship.⁴⁷ The clarity as well as the artistic quality of the handwriting was also taken into consideration by the examiners.

44. Shang Yanliu (商衍鑾), *Qingdai Keju Kaoshi Shulu* (清代科舉考試述錄) (1958), p. 103.

45. Shang, p. 103.

46. Shang, p. 105. See also Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China* (2000), p. 185.

47. Elman, *Cultural History*, p. 736.

The number of candidates who passed was not predetermined, but as a rule only one out of every twenty was successful in attaining to the status of a metropolitan graduate.⁴⁸ In 1789, there were ninety-eight successful candidates, the third smallest number during the entire Qing dynasty.⁴⁹ Ruan Yuan ranked twenty-eighth.

In certain years, for suspected irregularities or other reasons, the successful candidates were subjected to another examination, the *fushi* (覆試), literally meaning a re-examination, held at the Imperial Palace, before they were awarded the metropolitan graduate status.⁵⁰ In 1789, there was a re-examination, and it was held at the Yuan Ming Yuan (圓明園). Ruan Yuan ranked tenth.

The Palace Examination

Next came the Palace Examination (*dianshi* 殿試) held to determine the final ranking of the new class of metropolitan graduates.⁵¹ This examination took place during the fourth month at the imperial palace. Beginning in 1789, it was held at the Hall of the Preservation of Harmony (Baohedien 保和殿).⁵² In 1789 the examination itself took place on 21 May 1789, and the results were announced on the 25th. The atmosphere was courteous and more relaxed, and the procedure was strictly according to ritual. In theory, the examination was under the direct supervision of the emperor himself, although in practice he was not always present in person. The new metropolitan graduates who entered the palace grounds to musical accompaniment provided by the Board of Rites, alternately on their

48. Shang, p. 105.

49. During the earlier years of the dynasty, as many as close to 400 (395 in 1649, 397 in 1652, 399 in 1655, not including the Manchu candidates who were graded separately) would pass the examinations and become metropolitan graduates, but as the need to fill offices lessened, the number of successful candidates became more manageable. The smallest number of candidates who passed during the Qing was 81 in 1793. The second smallest was 97 in a special examination held in 1790. *Qing chao jinshi timin bei lu* (清朝進士題名碑錄), compiled by Fang Chao-ying and Tu Lien-che, Harvard Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement 19, XV:6–14, pp. 124–5.

50. Shang, p. 127; Chang, *Chinese Gentry*, p. 27.

51. A facsimile reproduction of a Palace Examination paper of 1903, that of Lai Chi-Hsi who ranked high on this examination and was appointed to the Hanlin Academy, is available in print form. Lai became the first Head of the Chinese Department at the University of Hong Kong, where he served for twenty years. See T. C. Lai, *A Scholar in Imperial China* (1970), pp. 22–40.

52. *Huidian Shili* (會典事例), as cited in Xie Qing (謝青) and others, *Zhongguo Kaoshi Zhidushi* (中國考試制度史) (1995), p. 246.

knees and on their feet performing the three kneelings and nine knocking the head on the ground of the full *kowtow*, were led through the elaborate ritual by officials in full court regalia. When the emperor attended in person, there were firecrackers as well as music. John Meskill observes that, despite the nomenclature, the palace examination ‘began the ceremonies of initiation of (the metropolitan graduates) into a select and honoured group’.⁵³

Shang Yanliu who took the civil service examinations himself in 1903, recounted his palace examination experience on both the system and the practice. Seating in the examination hall was open, except that all graduates sat facing north where the throne was located. The graduates vied for seats close to the doors for the light. The furniture Shang described was uncomfortable, more likely than not without cushions. As a result, many a candidate took to bringing in his own portable desk made of a wooden board with retractable legs, not unlike a modern folding card table. Since the graduate had to carry his equipment in rattan boxes anyhow, he used the box as a chair to this portable desk.

At the palace examination, the candidates were given comparative freedom of movement in the hall. Therefore, they could walk to the area where the Imperial Kitchen supplied tea and dried biscuits. They could also supplement this meagre ration with food they brought in from the outside.⁵⁴ The serving of tea, together with the high quality paper given to the graduates on which to write their essays, were ‘acts of courtesy’, (making) it clear that they had arrived close to the emperor and commanded respectful treatment.⁵⁵

Announcing the Results

Eight Readers (*dujuan guan* 讀卷官) read the essays and ranked the metropolitan graduates.⁵⁶ It was, however, if he so chose, the emperor himself who made the final decision on the ranking of the new graduates. They were divided by their grades, so to speak, into three groups (*jia* 甲). At a ceremony called the Calling of the Names (*luchuan* 臚傳) held at the Imperial Palace on the day after the palace examination, the list of the graduates were made public. The names of the new *jinshi* were called in order of their rankings. The first group comprised the top, second, and third ranking graduates of the class, known respectively as

53. John Meskill, ‘A Conferral of the Degree of Chin-shih’, p. 352.

54. Shang, p. 110. There was another recollection of a Kangxi-era palace examination in Fu Zeng xiang (傅增湘), *Qingdai Dianshi Kaolue* (清代殿試考略) (1933), pp. 15–7.

55. Miyazaki Ichisada (宮崎市定), *Jakyo* (科舉) (1963), p. 128, as cited in Meskill, p. 352.

56. Shang, p. 144.

the Top Scholar (*zhuangyuan* 壯元), the Second Ranking Graduate (*bangyan* 榜眼), and Third Ranking Graduate (*tanhua* 探花).⁵⁷ The graduates in the second and third groups were not given individual designations. This ceremony, having each graduate's name called aloud, and having the individual come up with an escort of Board of Rites officials, was tantamount to a formal act of the modern conferral of a doctoral degree. Ruan Yuan ranked third in the second group, or sixth among all the new *jinshi* of his class.⁵⁸

Joining the Elite of the Realm

In time, the new class of metropolitan graduates were invited into the palace for a celebratory banquet. The Board of Rites conducted this banquet, strictly in accordance with ritual, and there were food and wine. The ritual of the mid-Qing was adopted during the Ming. The Top Graduate was honoured with a table to himself; the Second and the Third Ranking Graduates shared another. The rest of the class was seated four to a table. During the Qianlong reign, the table settings — chopsticks, holders, and spoons — were made of silver in the Manchu style, while the wine cups were of gold. The food comprised forty courses from the Imperial Kitchen. The new celebrants were permitted to drink as much of the wine served as they could tolerate, but nobody writing on this subject has recorded any evidence of anyone being intoxicated on this occasion. Each graduate was given a souvenir, a small silk plaque with the words 'Banquet of Glory and Honour' (*en rong yan* 恩榮宴) on it. Only that presented to the Top Graduate was made of silver.

Five days after this banquet, all the new metropolitan graduates gathered at the Noon Gate (Wumen 午門) of the Forbidden City to receive other gifts from the emperor. The gifts to each person were court regalia, comprising a hat, a robe, a formal court robe, socks, and shoes. He was also given a cash gift of silver, fifty taels each to the first three ranking scholars, and thirty to the others. The Top Graduate, at least, was expected to pay for the construction of a commemorate arch in his native place to celebrate his attainments. On the day after, the metropolitan graduates were to congregate at the Noon Gate again, on their knees and garbed in their new robes, to thank the emperor for his gifts. Each

57. The translations of the titles are Benjamin Elman's. See *Cultural History of Examinations*.

58. Absolutely relevant to nothing whatsoever, it may be of interest to note here that, Ruan Yuan started to take the Palace Examination towards the end of May 1789 and received his appointment to the Hanlin Academy at the beginning of June. During the same days, the Estates-General was transforming itself into the National Assembly at Versailles, thus starting the French Revolution.

new graduate had to write a formal essay to thank the emperor, showing his gratitude. The essays were presented to the palace officials by the Top Graduate. After the graduates visited the Temple of Confucius to express their gratitude to the sage, they retired to their own banquet, with the Chief Examiner as the guest of honour.⁵⁹ The ancestors and families of the new *jinshi* were not involved.

Meskill sees the ceremonies and events beginning with the Palace Examination as symbols of three major bonds of the *jinshi* to the empire.

The greatest by far was the bond to the emperor, who accredited the candidates by examination, proclaimed them *chin-shih* (*jinshi*), awarded them gifts, and rewarded them with a banquet. The *chin-shih* in turn acknowledged him their master, patron, and benefactor through the kowtow, performed repeatedly. Also expressed, though far less fully, was the tie with officialdom – it was to the gathered officials that the new *chin-shih* first celebrated their success with food or drink. Finally, the *chin-shih* ritually affirmed a bond to the transmitters of the literary heritage when they sacrificed at the Confucian shrine, and, more immediately, sought one among the earlier triumvirates to compose their Memorial of Thanks for Imperial Graciousness.⁶⁰

Metropolitan Graduate and Hanlin

Placement of the new graduates depended on the results of the palace examination. The three top-ranking metropolitan graduates were appointed academicians of the Hanlin Academy (Hanlinyuan *xueshi* 翰林院學士) as a matter of course. As a rule, less than ten percent of the new class received appointment to the Hanlin Academy as bachelors (Hanlinyuan *shujishi* 庶吉士), and they came principally from the top-ranking graduates. The other graduates were assigned jobs in the capital as assistants and clerks in the Grand Secretariat, the Grand Council, the different boards in the capital, or in the provinces as magistrates, intendants, or prefects throughout the empire. This assignment of jobs according to metropolitan and palace examination rankings was significant. Those with no Hanlin Academy training were seldom expected to rise to beyond the fourth official ranking. In other words, top officials of the Qing, and indeed from previous dynasties began their career as members of the Hanlin Academy.

59. L. C. Arlington and William Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking* (1935; 1987 reprint), pp. 32, 38–9. In this publication there are some wonderful woodcuts. These woodcuts show ceremonies of imperial audiences for chiefs of tributary states, at the entrance to the Forbidden City at the Noon Gate, and a banquet at the Hall of the Preservation of Harmony, where the Palace Examination took place.

60. Meskill, p. 256.

Ji Huang (嵇璜 1711–94), Grand Secretary and Chancellor of the Hanlin Academy, assigned Ruan Yuan to the Manchu curriculum as he was under thirty and the youngest bachelor from his home province of Jiangsu.⁶¹ When the emperor declared that there was already a surfeit of students in the Manchu programme that year, or, more likely, it was Ruan Yuan's supporters not wanting to see him heading for a dead-end job, that he was transferred to the Chinese curriculum, which was much more to his liking. As a Hanlin Bachelor, he was given a monthly allowance of four taels and five *qian* (錢). In addition, he was to share with the other bachelors 1,400 taels appropriated from the Salt Administration.

The senior professors (*shujishi jiaoxi dachen* 庶吉士教習大臣) in charge of the bachelors in 1789 was Peng Yuanrui (彭元瑞 1737–1803), whose granddaughter was to marry Ruan Yuan's son at a later date, and Heshen (和珅). The latter's name being there gave rise to otherwise unsubstantiated assertions that at one time Ruan Yuan had served on Heshen's staff. As a protégé of Zhu Gui, so closely associated with the Jiaqing Emperor who detested Heshen, there was no way Ruan Yuan could have joined Heshen's staff without serious deleterious effect. Records show that the professors sent Ruan Yuan to the State Historiographer's Office (Guoshi guan 國史館) as a proof reader at the Imperial Printing Press and Bindery.⁶² Records also show that soon afterwards he was concentrating on his studies again in preparation for the General Examination (*dakao* 大考) required of all Hanlin Bachelor to qualify them for official appointments.

Although other factors counted, for a man like Ruan Yuan without a politically or socially prominent family background, his performance on this examination was important to his future career. Kenneth Folsom had concluded in his study on personal relationships among officials that

although the bureaucratic regulations and examination system attempted to make official employment as impartial as possible, still the personal element did have a bearing of varying degrees on official jobs ... Kinship and friendship were never successfully eliminated when there was a choice to be made between two equally qualified candidates.⁶³

61. *Jiaqing Huidian* 55:1b. All Hanlin bachelors under thirty were to follow the Manchu curriculum while the others followed the Chinese curriculum. Bachelors from certain provinces, however, were exempt from the Manchu programme, some absolutely, others under specific conditions.

62. *Diziji* 1: 8. This was a job with a salary. Ruan Yuan was assigned as a compiler in the State Historiographer's Office. The order of events as recorded in *Diziji* appears to be different from that established in the Qing Statutes. Further investigations revealed that Ruan Yuan was referred to as 'Compiler Ruan' 7A even before he took the Palace Examination. Perhaps his friends in high official circle had made it possible for him to enjoy a higher income.

63. Folsom, p. 23. Notes 58 and 59.

Then an emotional crisis seemed to have confronted Ruan Yuan in 1791 as the General Examination approached. He was living at the Yangzhou Hostel just outside the Front Gate (Qian Men 前門), in the Chinese Quarter of Beijing beyond the precinct of the Tartar City. The neighbourhood was full of activities, the hustle and bustle of everyday living of a Chinese city. Homesickness overwhelmed him. Perhaps he had an uncontrollable yearning to hold the daughter whom he had not yet seen. Perhaps things were not well at home. Or perhaps he was running out of funds. At any rate, his request for a leave of absence was rejected by Agui (阿桂 1717–97), then Senior Professor at the Hanlin Academy, on the grounds that it would set an undesirable precedence for Hanlin bachelors who wished to avoid taking the final examination to be granted home leave.⁶⁴ As a result, Ruan Yuan concentrated on his studies.

Top of the Class and Imperial Recognition

At the General Examination in 1791 the Qianlong Emperor himself ranked Ruan Yuan first in the class, reversing the examining officials' designation by moving Liu Fenggao (劉鳳誥 1761–1831), who had ranked first originally, to second place. The examination topics included a prose poem analyzing a rhyming poem (*fu* 賦) by Zhang Heng (張衡 78–139) on the celestial phenomena, and a commentary (*shu* 疏) on an episode from the *The Classic of History* on rewarding an official who had served the country well. Ruan Yuan showed his mastery of astronomy in one essay, and in the other discussed the official act in terms of policies of the current ruler, pleasing the emperor immensely.⁶⁵ It was when Ruan Yuan was presented that the Qianlong Emperor took an immediate liking to this young scholar. The emperor waxed to Agui with great enthusiasm: 'Ruan Yuan has a clear head and a sincere countenance . . . Imagine that at more than eighty years of age and I can still have the pleasure to discover a man with such talents to serve the country.'⁶⁶ As a result, Ruan Yuan was appointed to various offices, rising quickly in rank. By the time he was Director of Studies in Shandong in 1793, he was already a Sub-chancellor of the Grand Secretariat with the rank of 2B.

With imperial recognition and support Ruan Yuan was appointed in short order to a number of offices that gave him a chance to work with the emperor's sons as well as with officials at the helm of the government. Immediately after

64. *Diziji* 1:9.

65. These essays are reprinted in *YJSJ* 1:11; also in *Diziji* 1:10.

66. *Diziji* 1:11.

the General Examination he was made a Junior Supervisor of Instruction (*shao zhanshi* 少詹事), at the Supervisorate of Imperial Instruction (*Zhanshi Fu* 詹事府), a position open to Hanlin graduates but not usually attained to so early in the civil service career. Ruan Yuan's appointment, especially from the junior rank to the senior rank, was noteworthy.⁶⁷ The Supervisorate previously had been the secretariat for the heir to the throne. By the Qianlong era it had become an extension of the Hanlin Academy and a sinecure.⁶⁸

Being a Junior Supervisor of Instruction meant that Ruan Yuan not only enjoyed the rank and stipend of an official of the fourth rank (4A), he was also eligible for concurrent appointments which would bring him more income and exposure. His specific assignment was a compiler at the Imperial Study (*Nan Shufang* 南書房). Before the Yongzhen era when the Grand Council was established, the Imperial Study was where the emperor consulted his top officials on a daily basis. In Qianlong's time, it was more like a scholar's study. At the end of the reign, the Imperial Study was where officials were working on the supplement to the 'catalogue of paintings and specimens of calligraphy that (were) preserved in the various halls of the Palace',⁶⁹ *Shiqu Baoji Xubian* (石渠寶笈續編) and *Midian Zhulin Xubian* (秘殿珠林續編). Apparently the emperor spent his time in other scholarly pursuits as well. In the collection of miniatures of the Qianlong era at the National Palace Museum in Taipei, there is a small scroll of about one inch by two and a half written by Ruan Yuan. Dong Gao (董誥), who was to head the Grand Council when Ruan Yuan's name came up to be considered as Governor of Zhejiang in 1799, was at the Study.

Meanwhile, to make Ruan Yuan more accessible to the Qianlong Emperor who had enjoyed talking about astronomy with his new discovery, he was made a Diarist (*qiju zhuguan* 起居注官). Before the end of the year, he was a full Supervisor of Instruction (*zheng* 正), ranked 3A, on duty at the Imperial Library at the Wenxuan Ge (文淵閣) where the imperial collection of rare books, including the first manuscript copy of the *Four Treasuries*, was kept. He was then drawing a salary of 130 taels a year and 65 *shi* (石)⁷⁰ of rice. Before long, he was appointed a Sub-Chancellor of the Grand Secretariat, enabling him to enjoy the stipends of a second rank official. He was able to have his wife and child join him in Beijing.

67. Yang Ge (楊閣), *Zhongguo Hanlin Zhidu Yanjiu* (中國翰林制度研究) (1994), p. 255.

68. *Lidai Guanzhi Biao* (歷代官職表), compiled by Yong Rong (永瑤) and others (1780, Taipei reprint 1969), pp. 714–5.

69. Li Man-kuei, biography of Zhang Zhao (1691–1745), in *ECCP*, pp. 24–5.

70. A dry measure used for grain. During the mid-Qing, one *shi* roughly equalled 180–200 lb or about 80–90 kg. Chuan Hansheng and Richard A. Krause, *Mid-Qing Rice Markets and Trade* (1975), p. 79.

Unfortunately, they contracted small pox and died in the summer of the next year.

Concluding Comments

Ruan Yuan's seven years in Beijing were well spent. His intellect developed in depth and in discipline. He was fortunate enough to have the patronage of Zhu Gui, who provided him not only access to influential political figures, but also in a community of scholars. His intellectual background provided Ruan Yuan with an analytical approach to find practical solutions to problems. Now, in 1793, he was not yet thirty, already an acknowledged scholar with bright potential political future. He was an up-and-coming man, so to speak. He had an entrée to the arena of scholarship and government, and for the next half century he was to use his resources in the service of both.

That winter he left Beijing to become Director of Studies in Shandong. This appointment was the first of a long series of assignments in the provinces, where he was to leave his mark.

* * *

Perhaps this is the appropriate place to state that, as a young man in Beijing for seven years, Ruan Yuan must have lost his colloquial Yangzhou accent and was able to speak impeccable Mandarin for his services in such dialectically diverse provinces.

3

Director of Studies: Shandong, 1793–5; Zhejiang, 1795–7; and Expectant Official in Beijing, 1797–9

The Job

The system of selecting government officials by examination made the position of the director of studies (*xuezheng* 學政) in each province an extremely important one. Although this office carried no rank of its own, for the holder it could be a stepping stone to higher appointments. During the mid-Qing the director of studies was usually a Hanlin graduate holding the title and rank of another concurrent appointment. Ruan Yuan was holding two titles during his tenure in Shandong and Zhejiang, Senior Supervisor of Instruction 3A and Sub-Chancellor of Grand Secretariat on duty at Wenyuan Pavilion 2B.¹ He was, therefore, a capital official with an out-of-town assignment, that usually lasted three years. At different times during the dynasty the director of studies was known by different titles. The full title was Director of Studies by Imperial Appointment (Qinming Tidu Xueyuan 欽命提督學院). The military aspect of the title, Provincial Military Commander (*tidu* 提督), was included because he was also responsible for the examination of candidates for the military degrees. More commonly, however, during the mid-Qing, the official was known simply as Director of Studies.²

In order for the system of selecting officials by examination to work, the director of studies had to be excellent in scholarship and impeccable in personal integrity. It was the responsibility of the director of studies to send the best candidates in the province to Beijing. To produce such candidates, he had to ascertain that the curricula and the teaching upheld the established standards — and, incidentally, if he so chose, exercised censorship through selection of books to be included or excluded in instructing the young. As he also supervised the ‘annual’ and prefectural examinations, including ranking the candidates,

1. For all practical purposes, he carried the rank of 2B.

2. I have opted to use this translation to distinguish the title from that of a commissioner (*shi* 使) as in Financial Commissioner and Judicial Commissioner.

Ruan Yuan was in a position to influence the content as well as the standard of learning. It was the practice of the Director of Studies to compile a list of required and recommended books for young students on various levels in the province. There is extant such a list entitled *Catalogue of Books for Young Students in Shandong* compiled by Ruan Yuan (*Ruan Yuntai Shishengtong Shumu* 阮芸臺示生童書目). In this volume he introduced to a generation of students in Shandong works by contemporary scholars of the School of Han Learning, in addition to the standard Tang and Song texts.³

The job carried a great deal of independence and prestige, but the official had to work with the governor of the province where he was situated. In protocol, the director of studies normally occupied a position slightly higher than that of the provincial financial commissioner (*buzhengshi* 布政使) or judicial commissioner (*ancha shi* 按察使). When meeting face to face with the governor-general or the governor, his position was their equal.⁴

In the case where a governor was interested in education of the young, the two men worked closely together. While Ruan Yuan was Governor and Wen Ning (文寧) Director of Studies in Zhejiang, they submitted a joint memorial proposing a change in the eligibility regulations to permit members of an ethnic minority resident in counties of Chuzhou (處州) and Qingtian (青田) to take civil service examinations.⁵ The governor was accountable for the misdeeds, if any, of the

3. A required item all students needed to learn by heart from the outset was the *Kangxi Dictionary*. Also on the list were books in the *Four Treasuries*, works by Dai Zhen, Shao Jinhan, and books on astronomy, mathematics, and geography.

4. Chen Jinling (陳金陵), 'Cong Jiaqing Chao Xuezheng Mizou kan Qingdai Xuezheng' (從嘉慶朝學政密奏看代學政) (1982), p. 246.

5. See Shang Yanliu, *Qingdai Keju Kaoshi*, p. 45. Wenning was a Manchu of the Red Banner, metropolitan graduate of the class of 1784 and a Hanlin. I am grateful to the late S. T. Leong for pointing out that these people were not Hakka. Dr Leong wrote in 1978: 'Turning to yours of the 15th regarding Hakka in Zhejiang, my skepticism proved to be correct. You are quite right to suspect that the She (畬) were not Hakka at all. The present Hakka homeland in eastern Guangdong, southern Fujian and Jiangxi was in fact the original home of the She until they were pushed out brutally by the Hakka in Ming times. There was a bloody series of suppression of She revolts during the 15th century, mainly during the latter part of the Jiaqing reign. The She were pushed further uphill or forced to migrate to the hilly areas of Chuzhou and Qingtian in Zhejiang, among other places. The Hakkas were in the first instance *ke* (客) in relation to the She, who were the *zhu* (主) or *bendi* (本地). Because of a long period of contact, there was much mutual cultural influence. The She, who had no written language, now speak a language that is largely Hakka (at least Hakka in pronunciation). Other influences may extend into the women's headgear, non-footbinding, *shange* (山歌 folk songs) and so on, but I don't know who had picked up whose practices. In ethnographical literature, She is classified as one branch of the Yao (僛) people, distinct from the Zhuang.'

director. In 1809, as second-term governor of Zhejiang, Ruan Yuan was blamed by the emperor for not keeping in line the then Director of Studies, Liu Fenggao, demonstrating that as far as the central government was concerned, the Governor was to make sure of the good behaviour of the Director of Studies (see Appendix V).

As a rule, the director of studies had an enviable job. There was pressure of the office but the situations he had to face were predictable. Even though he was prohibited from socializing with the local gentry until after the series of examinations at which he presided had taken place, he could enjoy the companionship of other scholars and officials. Supervising examinations throughout the province entailed a good deal of travel, which, in both Shandong and Zhejiang, provinces rich in scenic beauty, archaeological and historical sites, as well as literary traditions, was pleasant indeed for Ruan Yuan. At Penglai (蓬萊), perched on cliffs on the coast of Shandong, a site of the legendary mirage of Tang poetry, the 'Heavenly Isle' (Penglai Xiandao 仙島), there are still extant engravings on stone from calligraphy by Ruan Yuan, who, upon seeing rocks exposed at low tide, compared them to certain constellations. Displaying his interest in astronomy, he named these rocks after the stars.⁶

Ruan Yuan in Shandong

Shandong, where Ruan Yuan served as Director of Studies from 1793 to 1795, was the locale of the ancient states of Lu (魯) and Qi (齊) of the period of the Warring States. It also boasted the shrine of Confucius, the Mecca for all Chinese scholars. The Director of Studies of Shandong resided at the provincial capital, Jinan (濟南), noted for its seventy-two springs.⁷ In the centre of the city, fed by streams from Mountain of the Thousand Buddhas (Qianfu Shan 千佛山) of the Taishan (泰山) range, was the Great Brilliant Lake (Daming Hu 大明湖). On the north-western shore of the lake stood a house, built by Alinbao (阿林保 d. 1809) when he was Salt Commissioner in Shandong.⁸ As the residence of the Director of Studies was just across the lake, Ruan Yuan visited the house whenever he had a chance, alone with a book, to escape the summer heat, or to enjoy the balance and harmony of the environs.⁹ Or he came in the company of friends, drinking

6. I saw this item in the summer of 1980 at Penglai.

7. *Jiaqing Yi Tongzhi* (嘉慶一統志) [General gazetteer compiled during the Jiaqing reign] as cited in Ruan Yuan, *Xiaocanglang Bitan* (小滄浪筆談) (1796), 2:3b–4.

8. Ruan Yuan, *Xiaocanglang Bitan* 2:9.

9. *Xiaocanglang Bitan* 1:1.

wine and composing poetry, and, in Ruan Yuan's case, drinking tea and writing poems. The house was called Small Pavilion of the Waves (Xiao Canglang Ting 小滄浪亭), a reference to the famous garden in Suzhou, Garden of the Waves (Canglang Yuan 滄浪園). Ruan Yuan further borrowed the name for the title of his first collection of poetry and essays, *Xiao Canglang Bitan* (小滄浪筆談 [Writings from the Small Canglang Studio]). A four-line poem from this collection reflects the feeling of tranquillity Ruan Yuan enjoyed on the lake:

Small boats caressing the lake,
Damaging not the lotus flowers;
Gathering dew drops from their leaves,
We brew tea for all of us.¹⁰

One special duty of the Director of Studies in Shandong was to be present at the seasonal sacrifices to Confucius at the latter's shrine in Qufu (曲阜).¹¹ The contemporary holder of the title Duke Yansheng (Yansheng Gong 衍聖公 1A),¹² the senior member of that generation of the descendants of Confucius, was to be present at the rite. In December 1794, when the winter sacrifice (*dongji* 冬祭) was to take place, Ruan Yuan was in Qufu. The seventy-second generation lineal descendant of Confucius, Kong Xianpei (孔憲培), had just died. His heir, Kong Qingrong (孔慶鎔), had not yet been invested.¹³ Ruan Yuan, therefore, officiated at the sacrifice. He found this experience exhilarating. He particularly treasured handling the sacrificial vessels. Ten bronze vessels from the Imperial Household collection, dating from the Zhou dynasty, had been given by the Qianlong

10. *Xiaocanglang Bitan* 1:1b.

11. *Xiaocanglang Bitan* 1:22b. For complete ritual for this rite used during the Qing, see *Qufu Xianzhi* (曲阜縣志), compiled by Pan Xing (潘相) (1968 printing), *juan* 46. See also *Diziji* 1:13b–14.

12. *Xiaocanglang Bitan* 1:22b. A description of the complete ritual of this rite used during the Qing can be found in *Qufu Xianzhi*, *juan* 46. See also *Diziji* 1:13b–14.

13. Kong Qingrong is listed in *Qingshi Gao: Rulin Zhuan* (清史稿儒林傳) [Biographies of scholars in the Draft History of the Qing dynasty] 4:4b, as the son of Kong Xianpei (孔憲培). Ruan Yuan's papers indicate that Qingrong was a son of Kong Xianzeng (孔憲增). Ruan Yuan's wife was Qingrong's sister, so the confusion involving the name of their father was troublesome. I am indebted to Professor Kong Decheng (孔德成), the seventy-seventh generation lineal descendant of Confucius who would have been the current Duke Yansheng had not the title be abolished by the Republic, for clearing up the confusion. Xianpei (Seventy-second generation) had no male child, therefore he adopted Qingrong, a birth son of Xianzeng, as his son and heir to the title. Xianpei and Xianzeng were full brothers (same father and mother). Ruan Yuan's description of the family relationship can be found in *Diziji* 1:15b–16.

Emperor to the Confucian Shrine in 1771.¹⁴ Ruan Yuan marvelled at the vessels themselves, appreciating even more the ancient inscriptions inside.¹⁵

Bi Yuan

The chance assignment of Bi Yuan to Shandong while Ruan Yuan was Director of Studies was beneficial to the latter. Bi, who was blamed by court officials surrounding the Qianlong Emperor for failing to identify the leaders of the White Lotus Rebellion before it became a widespread revolt, had been demoted to the post of Governor of Shandong from the loftier position of Governor-General of Hu-Guang. Bi was knowledgeable and interested in epigraphy, and had in fact prepared manuscripts on stone and bronze inscriptions in Shanxi and Henan where he had served earlier.¹⁶ Ruan Yuan proposed that Bi tackle a similar project in Shandong, but Bi replied,

I am getting old. Furthermore, government work is keeping me busy. Even if I had the desire to undertake this project, I no longer have the time or energy. Why don't you take on this task?¹⁷

Bi then recommended Zhao Wei (趙魏) to handle detailed research and writing while Bi and Ruan set the general guidelines for the study. Ready reference materials were provided by the library at the residence of the Director of Studies, Studio to Amass Antiquities (Jigu Zhai 積古齋). At a later date, Ruan Yuan was to name his own collection of ancient bronzes after this studio.¹⁸

14. These vessels had been identified and the inscriptions (where extant) deciphered by Ruan Yuan. See Ruan Yuan, *Shanzuo Jinshi Zhi* 1:1–5. Photographs of the ten vessels are reprinted in *Konglin* (孔林), compiled by Yu Houpei (鬱厚培), 1926. p. 12.

15. *Xiaocanglang Bitan* 3:3b–5.

16. *Guanzhong Jinshi Ji* (關中金石記) (Shanxi 1781) and *Zhongzhou Jinshi Ji* (中州金石記) (Henan 1787).

17. Preface by Ruan Yuan, *Shanzuo Jinshi Zhi* (山左金石志) (1796).

18. Ruan Yuan and other scholars at that time were more interested in deciphering the inscriptions on the bronze vessels than the vessels themselves as objects of art. One of the three most valued bronze vessels in the collection of the National Palace Museum in Taipei, *San Shi Pan* (散氏盤), contains inscriptions of 357 characters, recording a peace treaty. This treaty was deciphered by Ruan Yuan. See *Jiguzai Zhongding Yiqi Kuanshi* (積古齋鐘鼎彝器款識) 8:3–8b. In his general work on the bronzes, Ruan Yuan made mistakes in identifications as well as in deciphering, but his major contributions lie in his using the inscriptions to authenticate classical texts. See Chang Lin-sheng, 'Wen Wang Fangding yu Zhongju Fugui' (文王方鼎與仲駒父簋), *Gugong Xueshu Jikan* (故宮學術季刊) 15:1 (1997), pp. 1–44.

The relationship between Bi Yuan and Ruan Yuan extended to marriage ties. Bi had become a friend of Ruan Yuan's father. The latter was asked to serve as official matchmaker for Bi's daughter and the young duke. Bi was to facilitate the engagement between Kong Luhua, the elder sister of the sitting Duke Yansheng, to Ruan Yuan, who was at that time a widower. This marriage was to bring domestic companionship as well as social recognition for Ruan Yuan.

Brief Stopover in Yangzhou

In October 1795 Ruan Yuan was transferred to be Director of Studies in Zhejiang. Before he left Shandong he was made a Sub-Chancellor of the Grand Secretariat, carrying the rank of 2B while keeping his title of Vice-President of the Board of Rites 2A concurrently. He obtained permission to visit Yangzhou on his way from Jinan to Hangzhou, and moved into the Pavilion of the Small Waves to await the arrival of his successor. He left for Yangzhou in mid-November.

Ruan Yuan spent four days in Yangzhou. This visit to the place of his birth was the first since he left almost a decade earlier to try his fortunes in Beijing. It must have been satisfying to return in triumph, so to speak, as an official holding the very high rank of 2A, laden with imperial recognition and favour, and with the promise of an even brighter future than anyone had dared to expect or wish for ten years previously. Little was recorded of what he did during these four days, but on record was a dinner in his honour, held at a restaurant called the Garden of Tranquillity and Fragrance (Jingxian Yuan 靜香園) by the Rainbow Bridge (Hong Qiao 虹橋) which crossed the stream flowing into the Slender West Lake.¹⁹ Among the twenty or so friends present were Jiao Xun (1763–1820) and He Yuanxi (何元錫 1766–1829) who were to serve on his staff for a long time to come.²⁰

From Ruan Yuan's own account we also know that he offered sacrifices at his mother's grave, other ancestral graves, and the clan temple at Gongdao Bridge, but not at the family shrine in the city as it was yet to be built. He visited with the two 'Tigers', commemorating the occasion with pictures and poems, and made it possible for them to receive the honorary title Filial, Incorrupt, Straightforward, and Upright (Xiaolian Fangzheng 孝廉方正), giving them the status roughly equivalent to a provincial graduate.²¹ He buried the remains of his first wife and daughter, and adopted a distant relative, a young boy of about five or six, Ruan Changsheng (阮常生 d. 1833) as his son and heir. Also, following his father's

19. The Rainbow Bridge or a later reconstruction thereof, still stands.

20. Ruan Yuan, *Dingxiangting Bitan* (丁香亭筆談), compiled by Wu Qingdi (吳慶坻), 3:52.

21. *Diziji* 1:15b–16.

instructions, he took his first concubine, Liu Wenru (劉文如 1777–1849). Meanwhile, in consultation with members of the Ruan clan, he started to compile a family history.

Ruan Yuan in Zhejiang

Zhejiang, an area of rice, silk, and tea, was at the turn of the nineteenth century one of the richest provinces in China. Two mountain systems, separated by the Qiantang River (錢塘江), terminated in hundreds of offshore islands. Hangzhou, the political, cultural and commercial centre of the province, was one of the most beautiful and exciting cities that had survived the ages. For Ruan Yuan, there was the additional attraction of the famous collections of rare books, made possible by the province's wealth and tradition of scholarship.

When Ruan Yuan arrived in 1795, he found the residence of the Director of Studies in a dilapidated state.

The beams of the main hall were termite-eaten. The year after I arrived I had to have the roof replaced. That winter a fire which had begun in the city centre was carried by the winds to the residence and destroyed the drum tower ... Then, during the following summer, two wings in the western hall collapsed.²²

The renovation cost was two thousand taels.²³ Afterwards, Ruan Yuan planted several hundred peach and plum trees for the enjoyment of his successors rather than for himself, since 'the term of service for each commissioner is only three years. Yet it takes a tree ten years to reach maturity.'²⁴

Apart from its state of disrepair, the residence was very pleasant indeed. It provided a comfortable home once the renovations were completed. Built on top of a hill overlooking a garden with a lake, there was an arbour reachable by a stone bridge. The bridge was named Shadow Bridge (Yin Qiao 影橋), as 'reflections on the lake from the shadows of the climbing vines, the trees and flowers, of passing clouds and birds above, and swimming fishes below'²⁵ interplayed to create an idyllic scene.

Family and Friends

There was domestic bliss. Kong Luhua came to Hangzhou in May 1796, escorted by her parents for her wedding. The streets were filled with crowds to see the

22. *Chongxiu Hangzhou Fuzhi* (重修杭州府志), compiled by Wu Qingdi (吳慶坻) (1922–6), 18:11.

23. *Chongxiu Hangzhou Fuzhi*, 18:11.

24. *Dingxiangting Bitan* 1:14.

25. *Dingxiangting Bitan* 1:3b–4.

bridal procession of a descendant of Confucius and the serving Director of Studies, who also held concurrent offices of high ranking. The presents from the bridegroom's friends comprised poems alluding to obscure passages in the classics. Kong must have been unique among all the brides in China in that she was able to appreciate these esoterica. A daughter of a family with a long tradition of scholarship, she was well versed in the classics. In addition, her training in the arts of womanly virtue of the Chinese gentry had not been neglected. She bore Ruan Yuan one son and one daughter who survived infancy, and supervised the running of a large household which moved periodically, and shortly was to include three concubines as well as six children. She was given credit for reintroducing the silk worm to the north bank of the Yangzi,²⁶ and wrote poems which were printed. She died in 1833, and was buried at Leitang where Ruan Yuan was interred next to her when he died sixteen years later.

In addition, Ruan Yuan enjoyed congenial companionship. Two friends from the Beijing days, Qin Ying (秦瀛 1743–1821) and Qian Kai (錢楷 1760–1812), both at the Grand Council as clerks when Ruan Yuan was at the Imperial Study, were now in Zhejiang. Together they spent many happy hours enjoying the scenic beauty of the city and its environs, writing poems to commemorate various occasions.

Qin Ying, a native of Wuxi, had come from a long and distinguished lineage, both in scholarship and in government service. A great-great uncle was Qin Huitian (秦蕙田 1702–64), a high official at the Qianlong court. Qin Huitian rose to be President of the Board of Works, President of the Board of Punishment, and Grand Guardian of the Heir Apparent. Qin Ying had been a member of the bureau that compiled the *Four Treasuries*. After its completion he served as a secretary in the Grand Secretariat and a clerk at the Grand Council, despite the fact that he was only a provincial graduate. He was appointed by the Jiaqing Emperor to be Judicial Commissioner in Zhejiang 1799–1800. Eventually he became Governor of the Metropolitan Beijing Area (Shuntian Fuyin 順天府尹) and Vice-President of the Board of Punishment. In 1796–8 when Ruan Yuan was Director of Studies, Qin was in Zhejiang as Intendant of the Circuit of Wenzhou and Chuzhou (Wenchu daotai 溫處道臺).²⁷

Qian Kai was a native of Jiaying (嘉興) in Zhejiang. He was a metropolitan graduate of the class of 1789. A classmate of Ruan Yuan's, Qian was also assigned to the Hanlin Academy. After leaving the Academy he became an Assistant

26. Ruan Heng, *Yingzhou Bitan* 5:34–35b.

27. *Qingshi Gao* (清史稿), compiled by Zhao Erxun (趙爾巽), 360:2b–3b. For a modern account of this official in English, see Frank Ching, *Ancestors: 900 Years in the Life of a Chinese Family* (1988), pp. 322–53.

Secretary of the Board of Revenue and served as a clerk in the Grand Council. Eventually he served as governor in the provinces of Guangxi, Hebei, and Anhui. In 1810 he sent a memorial to the Jiaqing Emperor, warning that collaboration between the Customs officials at Canton and the merchants who were interested only in profits had led to a tremendous increase in the illegal importation of opium. He also linked the opium trade with activities of the secret societies. His service records did not place him in Zhejiang in any official capacity from 1796 to 1798, but his biography by Ruan Yuan written at his death contained the following passage:

Qian Kai was a highly skilled painter and calligrapher. We have been friends since our student days in Beijing. His daughter, Deyong (德容), is married to my son Hu.²⁸

It was at this time also, that scholars began to gather around Ruan Yuan. His childhood friend, Jiao Xun, who was married to Ruan Yuan's cousin, was one of the men who were to spend much of their lifetimes with him and provide him with intellectual companionship and assistance in many of his creative endeavours. They travelled with him throughout the province as he supervised the 'annual' and prefectural examinations. They visited the famous tides (*haichao* 海潮) at Haining (海寧) because 'by the time the tides reached Qiantang (where everybody else was watching them,) the tides would be only half the size they were at Haining'.²⁹ Ruan Yuan wrote that the tides in the Qiantang Estuary were highest during the autumn, and they were caused by the relative positions of the sun and the moon.³⁰ Jiang Zhengwei (蔣徵蔚), in a less scientific vein, compared the sound of the tides and the crests of the waves with white cranes, prancing horses, and dragons locked in battle.³¹

Literary Projects

His term as Provincial Director of Studies in Zhejiang marked a period of literary productivity for Ruan Yuan. Two collections of essays and poems, *Xiao Canglang Bitan* and *Shanzuo Jinshi Zhi* were completed. He printed works of other writers in two monumental collections. *Collection of Poems by the Brave Souls of the Huaihai Region* (Huaihai Yingling Ji 淮海英靈集) and *Collection of Poets in Zhejiang* (Liangzhe Yuxuan Lu 兩浙輶軒錄) comprised works by more than three thousand poets

28. *Qingshi Gao* 365: 7a–b. See also *Guochao Jixian Leizheng Chubian* (國朝稽獻類徵初編), compiled by Li Xun (李惇) (1884), 195:9b.

29. Ruan Yuan, *Dingxiangting Bitan* 3:14b.

30. *Dingxiangting Bitan* 3:14b–17.

31. *Dingxiangting Bitan* 3:18–21.

from the Yangzhou and Zhejiang regions respectively.³² Ruan Yuan also found time to examine, authenticate, collect, and present to the emperor rare books that had not been included in the *Four Treasuries*. Memorials accompanying these selections were collected into a book of essays entitled *Summary of Books Not in the Four Treasuries* (*Siku Weishou Shumu Ti Yao* 四庫未收書目提要).³³ The emperor so valued the books that they were put together in the style of the *Four Treasuries*. The collection was given the comprehensive title *Weiwan Bican* (委宛筆藏), and was placed in the emperor's own apartment.

Beginning of Scholarly Publications

It was during this period Ruan Yuan began to organize compilations which were to mark him as a major literary figure in all fields of Chinese learning. The first major project was the compilation of a dictionary. He gathered over thirty scholars under the chief editorship of Zang Yongtang (臧鏞堂 1767–1811) and his brother Zang Litang (臧禮堂 1776–1805), to produce the *Jingji Xuangu* (經籍纂詁), a dictionary that was to become the 'standard companion to classical scholars after 1800'.³⁴ In the preface, Zang Yongtang gave Ruan Yuan's reason for compiling this dictionary: 'In order to comprehend and appreciate the meaning of the classics, it is essential that every word and every term is understood in the contemporary context',³⁵ an essential element for Han learning indeed.

32. *Diziji* 1:18b.

33. Today there are 160 titles in this collection from the Imperial Library at the National Palace Museum. This number differs from that given by Ruan Yuan's son, Ruan Fu, in *YJS*. Ruan Fu had recorded 173 titles. Wu Che-fu, in charge of rare books at the museum at the time of my inquiry, gave several reasons for this discrepancy. (1) Ruan Yuan sent the books into the palace individually, each with a memorial, but sometimes there was more than one memorial for each set of books. When the books were counted at a later date, there was confusion between the number of books and the number of memorials. (2) Or, perhaps, Ruan Fu had miscounted the number of memorials. (3) Another possibility was that the memorials were sent first, and, for some reason, certain books were never submitted but were counted as if they were. (4) Certain books might have been lost in the Imperial Household. Wu Che-fu, 'Gugong Bowuyuan Shanben Jiuji Tushu de Dianchang Weihu ji Xuanyang' (故宮博物院善本舊集圖書的典藏維護及宣揚), *Sinological Monthly* 62 (February 1977), p. 35. See also Wu Che-fu, 'Weiwan Biecan Jianjie' (委宛筆藏簡解), *Gugong Tushu Jikan* 1:2 (1970), pp. 39, 57.

34. *Diziji* 1:20b.

35. *Jingji Xuangu*, prologue. To facilitate the compilation work, Ruan Yuan erected a series of buildings comprising fifty rooms on a hillside overlooking the West Lake. See Zhang Yin (張嶺), 'Gujing Jiushe Zhi Cugao' (1936), p. 5.

Other monumental projects conceptualized during this period included a new edition of the thirteen classics and commentary essays, *Shisanjing Zhushu fu Zjiaokan Ji* (十三經註疏附校勘記) [Thirteen Classics and collation notes] and a collection of biographies of mathematicians and astronomers of China and the West in chronological sequence, *Chouren Zhuan* (疇人傳). Although these works were not completed until much later when there were temporary lulls from official responsibilities, the pattern and directions for his literary creativity were established while he was Director of Studies in Zhejiang.

Beginning to Attract Large Staff of Scholars

Ruan Yuan's considerable compilation works necessitated a large staff of scholars who followed him wherever he went throughout his career. Although he made use of scholars of localities where he served, many who carried the major research and editorial responsibilities had begun to follow him during this period when he was Director of Studies in Zhejiang. Those who spent their lives under the patronage of Ruan Yuan include Yan Jie (嚴杰 1763–1843), who edited the 1,400 *juan Essays on the Classics by Scholars of the Qing* (Huang Qing Jingjie 皇清經解), and Jiang Fan, who edited the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Guangdong* (Guangdong Tongzhi 廣東通志). Others, who began their careers on Ruan Yuan's staff, but left to pursue independent political careers of their own, included Zhu Weibi (朱為弼 1771–1840, metropolitan graduate 1805), an authority on ancient inscriptions. Ruan Yuan's patronage of scholarship and learning in the tradition of the Zhu brothers, and Bi Yuan will be considered in Chapter 9. The large number of scholarly work published under the aegis of Ruan Yuan, however, exceeded all the other noted patrons of learning of the era. While individual works are mentioned in various chapters of this work in the context of Ruan Yuan's activities, a catalogue of his publications in accordance with modern library classification methodology, can be found in Appendix IV.

Academies

Ruan Yuan played an important role in education by founding academies and establishing libraries in the provinces where he served, as well as his own home province of Jiangsu. Among the academies of the time, less commonly known to be associated with Ruan Yuan but founded or rejuvenated by him were the Anlan Academy (安瀾) in Haining, the Chongwen (崇文) Academy in Qiantang, and the Ziyang (紫陽) Academy in Ziyang, all in Zhejiang, and the Taliang Academy

in Henan.³⁶ The academies on which he expended the most of his time and energy, however, remained those he established in Hangzhou and Canton. Instead of calling these academies *shuyuan* (書院) in the traditional way, Ruan Yuan styled the institution in Hangzhou the Gujing Jingshe (誥經精社), literally ‘a place to concentrate on the essence of the classics’, a term derived from the Han tradition, and the academy in Guangzhou *tang* (堂), simply ‘the hall’. He personally selected the sites, placing the Gujing Academy on the shore of the West Lake used for the compilation of the classics dictionary earlier, and the Xuehaitang on the side of the Yuexiu Hill (粵秀山), under the shade of beauteous bamboo and majestic pine trees.

Ruan Yuan himself supervised the Gujing Jingshe for eight years, and the Xuehaitang for six, choosing renowned scholars to teach. At Gujing Jingshe, he appointed Wang Chang (王昶 1725–1806) to lead the faculty of literature and Sun Xingyan (孫星衍 1753–1818) to be head of the classics. Students were also carefully selected. In fact, the Gujing Jingshe was more like a graduate school for scholars than a preparatory school for examination candidates.³⁷ Eight scholars, including Cantonese natives, the most notable of whom Lin Botong (林伯桐 1775–1845) and later Chen Li (陳澧 1810–82), led successive faculties at the Xuehaitang. All the time, the scholars researched and wrote, their works were published under the imprints of the academies.

In addition to the classics, the curriculum at the Gujing Academy included astronomy, mathematics, history and geography, broadening the traditional areas of study considerably. All the while, Ruan Yuan insisted on the acquisition of useful knowledge.³⁸ Scholars who had taught or studied at these academies, carried their standards and traditions to other institutions in other provinces. The Xuehaitang, and indeed all other academies until the onset of Western-style education in China, were modelled on the Gujing Jingshe. A twentieth-century study by Zhang Yin on the Gujing Jingshe founded by Ruan Yuan and controlled by the generation of scholars stemming from it discovered that, during the 103-year period (1801–1904) the institution was in operation, there were forty-seven provincial-level examinations in Zhejiang. Between five to six percent of the successful candidates had studied at the academy. Twenty-five percent of candidates from Zhejiang who took the metropolitan examination in 1902 were its graduates.³⁹ Three years after the

36. See Xie Guozhen (謝國楨), *Jindai Shuyuan Xuexiao Zhidu Bianqian* (近代書院學校制度變遷) (1972), pp. 2–18.

37. Yin Danhou (尹旦侯), ‘Ruan Yuan: Qing Zhongye de Jiaoyu Shigan Jia’ (阮元：清中葉的教育實幹家) (1986), p.103.

38. For instance, see *Xuehaitang Zhi* (學海堂志), compiled by Lin Botong, p. 3.

39. Zhang Yin (張崑), ‘Gujing Jingshe Chugao (誥經精社初稿) *Wenlan Xuebao*’, 2:1, p. 1.

opening of the Xuehaitang, one of its graduates placed first on the metropolitan examination.⁴⁰

Ruan Yuan funded the academies by soliciting contributions from the officials and from the local gentry, which, in the case of Zhejiang, comprised salt, silk and tea merchants, and in Canton, the *hong* merchants. Money was lent for interests, and fields were purchased for cultivation and for rent. Receipts were used to for capital improvements as well as purchase and printing of books, and to pay the salaries and stipends of the scholars and students.⁴¹ This method of funding, by using income from investing the capital to cover current expenses, is still used by educational institutions today.

Libraries

Libraries were an integral part of these academies. Ruan Yuan called the libraries he founded *shucang* (書藏), collection of books, a term dating back to pre-Han times, but essentially they were libraries. There were collections of books at the academies.

While he was Director of Studies, Ruan Yuan was able to stop at various historic sites in Zhejiang. He saw and repaired the tomb of the cultural hero King Yu (禹 c. 2205 BC) and that of the Song dynasty poet Su Dongpo (蘇東坡 1036–1101) as he toured the province evaluating the conditions of book collections. He paid considerable attention to the famous collection of books at Ningbo (寧波), the First Library Under the Sky (Tianyige Shucang 天一閣書藏). This collection of rare editions was begun in the middle of the sixteenth century by Fan Qin (范勤 1506–85).⁴² Since then, his descendants had adhered strictly to the regulations established by the original collector. By the Qianlong reign in the eighteenth century, the collection had become unique, in the sense that no other library in the empire could boast a collection of equal size and quality. During the centuries of its existence, several catalogues of the collection had been compiled. By the end of the eighteenth century when Ruan Yuan saw the library, the collection was in poor condition.⁴³ Humidity, insects, and pilferage had caused problems. Not all curators had been dependable and responsible.

40. This feat, of course, was exulted everywhere. See, for instance, *Diziji* 5:22b.

41. For details see *Xuehaitang Zhi* 1b–3.

42. Fan Qin of Ningbo was a metropolitan graduate of 1532 and served on the Board of War. See also Ruan Kuisheng (阮葵生), *Chayu Kehua* (茶餘客話) [Chatterings of a tea guest], Taipei edition, n.d., p. 39.

43. Cai Peiling (蔡佩玲), *Fanshi Tianyige Yanjiu* (范氏天一閣研究) (1991), p. 223.

He visited the library twice more, in 1796 and again in 1803 when he was Governor. As he felt that owners of rare books, like those who collected fine art, should be of the mind that their holdings were in trust for future generations, he told members of the Fan family to take immediate steps to get rid of the dampness and insects in the library. He further ‘ordered’ (*ming* 命) the current collection checked against all previous catalogues, to ensure that the books in the collection were there and that the editions were authentic.⁴⁴

Subsequently, Ruan Yuan established another library in Hangzhou. The site selected was the Lingyin Monastery (靈隱寺), on a hill overlooking the West Lake. Founded in 326 AD, this monastery was one of the biggest religious complexes in China, housing ‘the largest and most important monastery in Hangzhou and once had 3,000 monks, nine towers, 18 pavilions, and 75 halls and rooms’.⁴⁵ Apparently the Lingyin Monastery was also noted for its vegetarian cuisine. Ruan Yuan and several friends, including the Director of the Ziyang Academy (紫陽書院), went to the monastery to dine on fresh bamboo shoots, which was in season, and to enjoy the fresh air. It was at that time the Director came up with the idea of a library. Ruan Yuan ordered book shelves built in a space behind the main hall of the Buddha. A set of the *Siku Quanshu* was being printed in Zhejiang when Ruan Yuan first arrived as Director of Studies, so the volumes were placed on deposit at the library.⁴⁶ In addition, there were works by contemporary writers such as Zhu Gui, as well. Having in mind the loss of books from the Tianyige Library, one of the regulations was ‘once a book is in the catalogue, it cannot be taken out of the library’.⁴⁷

44. After Ruan Yuan’s time the Library continued to suffer from natural and man-caused causes. There were serious damages to the collection in 1841–2 (Opium War) and the 1850s–60s (Taiping Rebellion). In 1930, a well-known collector, Ye Gongchao (葉恭綽), sent a telegram to the then Mayor of Ningbo, Yang Ziyi (楊子毅), to ‘do something about the Tianyige Collection’. Yang found that more than half of the books listed in Ruan Yuan’s catalogue were missing from on the shelves. This effort by Ye and Yang showed that as late as the 1930s, there was still an interest in this collection. See *Tianyige Jiancun Shumu* (天一閣見存書目) [List of books still visible in the Tianyige collection], compiled by Xue Fucheng (薛福成) and Chen Dengyuan (陳登原), first printed in Taipei in 1970. Attached to this work is an account of the collection, ‘Tianyige Zangshukao’ (天一閣藏書考) [An examination into the Tianyige collection] by Chen Dengyuan, who was a research scholar at the University of Nanking (金陵大學).

45. David Leffman and others, *China: The Rough Guide* (2000), p. 444.

46. Ruan Yuan, ‘Hangzhou Lingyin Shucang Ji’ (杭州靈隱書藏記), in *YJSJ* 3:2. The library was completed just as Ruan Yuan was leaving for Beijing in 1809. The collection was destroyed by the Taiping forces during the 1850s when they occupied Hangzhou.

47. *YJSJ* 3:2.

Another renowned library established by Ruan Yuan was in the Monastery at Jiaoshan (焦山), an island in the Yangzi River across from Yangzhou, just outside Zhenjiang (鎮江). The establishment of this library was at the suggestion of the monks in residence. In 1812, Ruan Yuan was Director-General of Grain Transport, based in the locality at Huai'an (淮安). He was asked by the abbot to set up a collection of books at Jiaoshan like the one in the Lingyin Monastery, and similar institutions elsewhere. The response was positive, and Ruan Yuan soon amassed a collection.

During the years Ruan Yuan served as director of studies his intellectual interests expanded. He made connections with scholars and began the conceptualization of many major works. Chen Jinling has found that the Jiaqing Emperor was to make use of the directors of studies as his eyes and ears in the provinces on a myriad of issues, but it did not appear that Ruan Yuan was a part of the intelligence scheme.⁴⁸

Beijing

On 20 October 1798, Ruan Yuan returned to Beijing after six years as Director of Studies in the provinces. At that time he was thirty-four years old, already known for his scholarly attainments but with administrative experience yet to come. He held the title Vice President of the Board of War, then the Board of Rites, and again as Vice President of the Board of War, but he was actually on duty at the Imperial Study all the time. Within a few months Qianlong was to die, leaving Jiaqing in search for talents to fill various provincial posts. As the new emperor's chief advisor was Zhu Gui, Ruan Yuan's second sojourn in Beijing also proved to be a timely one. For the funeral rites of Qianlong, he was transferred to the Board of Rites where he worked under Zhu Gui. In between, he served as an assistant examiner for the 1799 Metropolitan Examination.

In Beijing at the Start of a New Reign

The Grand Council February 1799

After the death of his father, the Jiaqing Emperor immediately reconstituted the Grand Council, which, Beatrice Bartlett found to have 'dominated patronage'⁴⁹ during the Qianlong era, and, during its final years, Heshen had dominated the

48. Chen Jinling (陳金陵), in *Qingshi Yanjiu Ji* 7, pp. 245–55.

49. Beatrice S. Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers* (1991), p. 238.

Grand Council. In February 1799, the new emperor publicly placed the blame for the country's ills on Heshen. The 'most urgent task confronting Jiaqing at his father's death (therefore) was to rid his administration of the influence of the minister Heshen'.⁵⁰ While unable or unwilling to dislodge all the officials, the new emperor nevertheless reorganized the Grand Council by appointing his own men to the council. As a result, the Grand Council in February 1799 was new, even though some of the Grand Councillors had served before. Nevertheless, for the Councillors, Ruan Yuan's was not an unknown name.

Several Grand Councillors knew Ruan Yuan personally. He had worked under Dong Gao (董誥 1740–1818) when he was a young Hanlin at the Imperial Study in 1791. Nayancheng (那彥成 1764–1833) was a classmate. The First Prince Cheng Yongxing (成親王永璉 1762–1823), the eleventh son of Qianlong, was a friend of Zhu Gui.⁵¹ There was no reason for the other grand councillors, Dai Quheng (戴衢亨) and Qinggui (慶桂 1735–1816), to oppose any choice of the emperor, especially since Ruan Yuan had been Director of Studies and was familiar with conditions in Zhejiang. In the final analysis, the decision to appoint Ruan Yuan was an imperial prerogative, but it was Zhu Gui who had recommended him for the job.

Zhu Gui

Zhu Gui became a formidable force at court in the new alignment of political power in 1799. On the very day of his father's death, Jiaqing sent for Zhu who was then Governor of Anhui.⁵² Zhu had been demoted to this post from that of Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi by Heshen's clique earlier. At that time he was already holding the title of President of the Board of Civil Office, the premier ministry of the Qing central government. His subsequent concurrent appointments as President of the Board of Revenue, Director of the Historiography Office and of the *Shilu* Office⁵³ notwithstanding, the most significant indication of his new role was the control of the purse strings of the government.

50. Susan Mann Jones and Philip A. Kuhn, 'Dynastic Decline and the Roots of Rebellion', in *CHOC* 10 (1978), p. 108.

51. *Diziji* 1:12. The prince was known as a skilled calligrapher and carver of stone seals. He had presented such a seal to Zhu Gui, and Zhu had given it to Ruan Yuan.

52. *Shilu* Jiaqing reign 37:13b. Zhu Gui received the communication eight days later, on 16 February 1799. See also biography of Zhu Gui, *Qingshi Liezhuan* (清史列傳), 28:6b.

53. The immediate task of these offices after the assumption of power of a new emperor was to record the events of the previous reign.

Upon receiving the emperor's dispatch written in blue ink, a sign that the court was in mourning, for the emperor ordinarily wrote in vermilion, Zhu Gui rushed back to the capital. Immediately on his arrival at the palace, 'the emperor received him, holding his hands, sobbing until there was no voice left any more; ordered him to move directly into the Imperial Study, and to take charge of the State Treasury at the Board of Revenue'.⁵⁴ This taking charge of the State Treasury was significant, as this department was responsible for the revenue and expenditure of the central government. It scrutinized financial reports from the provinces and those from imperial silk factories in Jiangsu and Zhejiang. It controlled the treasuries (*sanku* 三庫) where government funds in bullion were stored, as well as the imperial silk supplies and inventory of ores and dyes.⁵⁵ In addition, the department had the power to re-organize provincial treasuries whenever it saw fit. Until the death of the Qianlong Emperor the State Treasury had been controlled by Heshen and Fuchang'an. Controlling this department was the key to command of the rest of the government machinery. The Board of Revenue itself, in addition, controlled

the collection of taxes and, since the biggest single tax was the land tax, the management of land registration. It controlled the transportation of taxes and tributes from the provinces to the government offices, regulated payment to nobles and government employees; it audited the accounts of the central and provincial treasuries, and maintained control of the customs houses. It governed currency and coinage, took the census, and kept up the records of the empire's territory and provincial boundaries.⁵⁶

'The emperor consulted Zhu Gui on all policies.'⁵⁷ Meanwhile, he was given a 'grace and favour' residence outside the Western Gate (Xihua Men 西華門) of the Forbidden City. 'The emperor listened to Zhu's advice and followed his suggestions more than he did the grand councillors.'⁵⁸ Jiaqing's affection for Zhu was such that he personally attended the latter's funeral in 1807. He paid another visit to Zhu's grave ten years later.⁵⁹

Ruan Yuan was very special to Zhu Gui, judging by the fact that the Zhu family asked Ruan Yuan to write the epitaph when Zhu died.⁶⁰ The normal

54. *YJSJ* II:3:46. See also Xu Shichang (徐世昌), *Da Qing Jifu Xianzhe Zhuan* (大清畿輔先哲傳) (1968), p. 344.

55. *Diziji* 1:21a–b.

56. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 62.

57. Xu Shichang, p. 344.

58. Li Man-kuei, Biography of Chu Kuei, in *ECCP*, p. 185.

59. *ECCP*, p. 186.

60. *YJSJ* II:3:1–14b. This essay, unfortunately, did not arrive in time for it to be carved onto Zhu Gui's commemorative tablet that was to be sealed inside his tomb. Note by Ruan Changsheng, *Yanjing Shiji* 14b.

procedure, in the case of the death of an individual not necessarily an official, was for the family to honour a younger friend, preferably one with a high official rank, by inviting him to write the epitaph of the deceased. As Zhu Gui died at the height of power and imperial favour, it could not have been difficult to find a high-ranking official willing to write his epitaph. The family's choice of Ruan Yuan, therefore, must have been in deference to Zhu Gui's wishes, showing once more the close relationship between the two men.

Ruan Yuan's Reasons for Accepting Provincial Appointments

One major reason for Ruan Yuan's willingness to move to a provincial assignment, away from the centre where policies were made, must have been the fact that financially he could not afford to remain long in a capital office. Figures given in Chang Chung-li's study, *Income of the Chinese Gentry*, show a vast difference between compensations received by capital officials and those in the provinces. Income of an individual official from office was divided into four categories: salary, administrative expenses (*gongfei* 公費), honesty-fostering allowance (*yanglian* 養廉), and 'extra income'. The amount of salary was the same for all officials, and the top annual salary was 180 taels. The so-called 'extra income' was also negligible. It was the *yanglian*, from 10,000 to 20,000 taels per year in Ruan Yuan's case as a provincial official, and the 'extra income' ranging around 180,000 taels per year, that made the difference. The family could not provide Ruan Yuan with any financial cushion. So he depended completely on his income from office.

Zhejiang held special attractions for Ruan Yuan. Having committed himself to continuing the work begun by Dai Zhen, Ruan Yuan wanted to make use of the community of scholars he had come to know while he was Director of Studies in the province. Moreover, he had begun the compilation of the classical dictionary, *Jingji Zuangu*. In 1799, the original compilation was finished, but scholars were still working on the supplement. He had been holding discussions with scholars such as Jiao Xun and Li Rui on the compilation of the biography of mathematicians and astronomers, a task that theoretically was begun by scholars in Hangzhou, but Ruan Yuan did not find time to complete the work until 1810, when he was in disfavour and was spending his time in Beijing without administrative responsibilities.

Furthermore, administrative problems such as the suppression of coastal piracy challenged Ruan Yuan. He was young enough to visualize the effective implementation of a realistic anti-piracy programme based on a properly executed traditional policy infused with innovations where needed, under his aegis. He had felt keenly the sufferings of the coastal populace in the hands of the pirates

when he travelled on the Zhejiang coast as Director of Studies earlier. Now that he was offered the opportunity to alleviate their sufferings, he was ready to take up the challenge.

In the winter of 1799–1800, Ruan Yuan left for Zhejiang, where he was to serve as Governor — except for the period of mourning for his father's death 1806–1807 — for the next decade, until he was dismissed abruptly in the summer of 1809 (see Appendix V).

PART TWO

The Provincial Official at Work

4

Internal Security and Coastal Control: Piracy Suppression in Zhejiang, 1799–1809¹

In the winter of 1799–1800 when Ruan Yuan first arrived in Zhejiang as governor, his most urgent task was the suppression of coastal piracy.² The initiation and implementation of a comprehensive programme to halt the pirate activities off the southeast coast of China within the directives of Jiaqing remained a major challenge for him during his tenure in this province, 1799–1805, and again in 1808–9. This task was more difficult because the programme had to be implemented without drawing from the regular tax revenue of the province.

Background of Coastal Piracy

Throughout history pirates had plagued the Chinese coast, but it was the anti-dynastic character of piracy during the early Qing that added a political dimension to their threat. At the beginning of the dynasty, the coast of Fujian and Zhejiang had provided a strong base for the Ming loyalist movement. Zheng Chenggong (鄭成功 1624–62), who had pledged himself to the Ming cause, had organized the province of Fujian into military units and staged expeditions against the Manchu troops from there. In 1658 he landed in Zhejiang and Jiangsu with a force estimated to be between 100,000 and 170,000 men. After some initial success, his campaign ended in a disaster. He then retreated to Xiamen (廈門 Amoy)

1. An earlier version of this chapter was published as 'Internal Security and Coastal Control: Juan Yuan and Pirate Suppression in Chekiang 1799–1809', *Ch'ing-shi Wen-t'i* 4:2 (1979), pp. 83–112.

2. Within the scope of this chapter, piracy is defined as the act of taking by force ships or other possessions from their lawful owners on the water, equivalent to robbery on land. The term piracy will also include acts of robbery by perpetrators whose home bases were on water, but who raided coastal villages. The pirates discussed here will include those who operated on a large scale with fleets organized in confederations that challenged official forces in open battles off the coast, as well as the individual perpetrators who functioned in small groups near the shore.



Map 4.1 Zhejiang circa 1800: Showing locations where Ruan Yuan set up soup kitchens

and from there to Taiwan, as Lynn Struve has observed, because ‘he needed a territory that was larger and more secure from the Ch’ing (Qing), but which still was located proximate to the major East Asian maritime trade routes’.³ This attempt to move to Taiwan did not enjoy the total support from his commanders some of whom thought that Taiwan lacked ‘supplies and ship building facilities’.⁴ Furthermore, the Dutch were in Taiwan at that time. After Zheng’s death in 1662, his successors continued to raid the Zhejiang and Fujian coast with munitions sold to them by Dutch and English traders, leading the Qing court to declare an embargo against all foreign imports later that year. The court ordered all coastal ports closed to foreign trade and all inhabitants evacuated thirty to fifty *li* (里) inland in order to cut off supplies to the Zheng group. This embargo was lifted in 1685 when Zheng’s successors surrendered Taiwan to the Qing government, so the coast was considered safe from organized attacks once more. Provincial officials were told to continue their vigilance for any possible sign of a resurgence of such activities, however.

Towards the end of the Qianlong reign in the 1790s, the pirates preying on coastal residents and offshore traders were primarily men from localities in southern Zhejiang and coastal Fujian. Residents of this region, living ‘along an irregular and inhospitable shore’,⁵ turned to the sea. Traditionally, the bulk of the Chinese pirates had come from this fishing and seafaring element of the populace. Natural disasters such as the severe flooding along the Zhejiang and Fujian coast in 1794, the worst in one hundred years, further disrupted the already depressed economy of the region. The price of rice, for instance, rose by eight hundred copper cash per *shi* in the spring of 1795.⁶ This was a major jump even though rice prices always fluctuated seasonally in China. Heavy exaction and drastic depreciation in the value of copper cash in terms of silver further added to the people’s burden. The displaced persons joined the ranks of the populace who sought to supplement their income by robbing travellers and traders along the coast.⁷ Their activities were disturbing for the authorities, but were not so menacing as the pirate organized into groups.

3. Lynn A. Struve, *The Southern Ming 1644–1662* (1984), p. 190.

4. As quoted in Struve, p. 192.

5. G. B. Cressy, *China’s Geographical Foundations* (1934), p. 337.

6. A large number of the pirates active during this era came from counties affected seriously by the floods. *Qing Shilu* Qianlong 1489:4. Detailed information from GZD-JQ000182 (JQ1/2/17 [1796/3/25], memorial from Kuilun (魁倫), Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang. The retail price of rice rose by 800 copper cash in 1795.

7. Goods taken by five pirates whose confessions were attached to GZD (QL60[1795]) ranged from money (200,000 copper cash in one instance, and 10 silver dollars in another), food (rice, livestock, sugar), to articles of trade (30 bolts of cloth in one instance, 200 felt hats in another).

Piracy 1790–1802: Vietnamese Involvement

By the end of the eighteenth century, several pirate leaders had succeeded in amassing larger fleets, attaining the capacity to interfere with official transport and maritime trade. They plundered the coast for provisions of food and munitions, and extracted silver by holding lives and cargo for ransom. Circumstances were further complicated by political events in Annam and subsequent Chinese reactions to them. Privateers, armed with commissions from the Annamese government, became active in the South China Sea.⁸ Sometimes they entered the East China Sea and ravaged the Zhejiang and Fujian coast as well. Their support for the local pirates enabled the latter to obtain superior ships and weapons, making them even more difficult for official forces to control. This collaboration made possible the rise of the major pirate fleets in the East China Sea.⁹ These fleets, comprising ‘more than 200 ships and 10,000 men at one time’,¹⁰ were the principal targets of the Qing anti-piracy programmes at that time, especially since confessions of captured pirates were indicating connections with the Heaven and Earth Society, an anti-dynastic secret society on land.¹¹

Cai Qian

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the rarely disputed leader of the pirates active off the Zhejiang coast, the one pirate assigned a significant role in published official records, was Cai Qian (蔡牽 d. 1809), Ruan Yuan’s most formidable antagonist throughout his campaign against piracy. Although Cai’s name was first noted in the *Veritable Records* (*Shilu* 實錄) in 1798, he did not gain

8. *Qingshigao Shuguo Zhuan* (清史稿屬國傳) II:9b–10. See also GZD JQ 000182; 001392 (JQ1/11/1 [1796/11/29]), memorial from Jiluo (Gioro) Jiqing (吉羅吉慶), Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi; and Guoshi Guan, ‘Draft Biographies of Ruan Yuan’, No. 1899 and No. 1266(1).

9. See Appendix II. Contrary to impression created by works of Qing history, the noted pirate Cai Qian was never the leader of the Fengwei Fleet, one of the two leading pirate fleets operating in the East China Sea at that time. He had, on and off under his command, however, remnants of the Fengwei Fleet after its dissipation in August 1800, but the fleets under Cai Qian were referred in official documents as well as contemporary accounts as the Cai Qian Fleet.

10. GZD-JQ004685 (JQ5/1/17[1800/2/11]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

11. Enclosure in memorial from Yude (玉德), Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang dated JQ 8/3/30, as cited in Ji Shijia (季士家), ‘Luelun Cai Qian defan Qing Douzheng’ (略論蔡牽的反清鬥爭) (1982), p. 60, note 39.

dominance in the pirate hierarchy until 1800.¹² Cai came from coastal Fujian. As he was killed at sea instead of being captured, there was no deposition from which first-hand information on him can be drawn. Thus very little is known about him personally. Qing scholars even disagreed on his birthplace. Wei Yuan (魏源 1794–1856) wrote that Cai had come from Tongan (同安), a county in the prefecture of Quanzhou (泉州) on the Fujian coast.¹³ Jiao Xun, a reputable contemporary scholar serving on Ruan Yuan's staff during this period, on the other hand, attributed Cai's native home as Zhangzhou (漳州), slightly further south.¹⁴ Yude, Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang when Ruan Yuan was governor, had reported to the emperor that Cai was from the Village of Xiapu in Tongan County.¹⁵ In any case, that Cai was killed in a battle by official forces in 1809 at the age of forty-seven *sui* was a certainty. Confessions by his followers showed him to be short in stature, with a small beard.¹⁶ Cai, an orphan, eked out a living on land as a peasant before becoming a fisherman. He joined the pirates in 1795.¹⁷ 'Crafty and unprincipled, but skilful at command,'¹⁸ he would stop at nothing to gain ascendancy over other pirate leaders, including using his own wife as bait to entice a rival into a trap which led to the latter's destruction.¹⁹ Cai recruited his followers at first by persuasion, then by coercion if necessary. He was willing to share responsibilities with those who had the constitution and temperament to undertake them. One such person, Din Xing (丁興), a native of Zhejiang, joined Cai in March 1798 and worked on one of his ships.²⁰ By July that year, Din was entrusted with the command of a ship of his own, with a crew of eleven. Once given the command, an individual leader was expected to recruit more followers. Murray's study on the pirates in the South China Sea has found that this method of recruiting followers was common, and that it contributed eventually to the demise of the pirate confederation.

12. *Qing Shilu*, JQ34:2 (JQ3/9/2[1798/10/10]).

13. Wei Yuan (魏源), *Shengwu Ji* (聖武記) 8:37b. That Cai was a native of Tongan was supported by compilers of the Gazetteer of Xiamen of the Daoguang reign. See Kong Li (孔立), 'Cai Qian Jituan Jiqi Haishang Huodong de Xingzhi Wenti' (蔡牽集團及其海上活動的性質問題), pp. 420–30, and Ye Zhiru (葉志如), 'Shixi Cai Qian Jituan de Chengfen ji qi Fan Qing Douzheng Shizhi' (試析蔡牽集團的成分及其反清鬥爭實質), pp. 829–42.

14. Jiao Xun, 'Shenfeng dangkou houji' (神風蕩寇後記), in *Diaogu Louji* (雕菰樓集) 19:11b.

15. Memorial from Yude dated JQ59/6/6/, as cited in Ji, p. 59, note 27.

16. Memorial from Yude JQ59/6/6.

17. Jiao Xun, 19:11b. See also Ji, p. 59.

18. Wei Yuan, 8:37.

19. Jiao Xun, 19:11b.

20. GZD-JQ003699 (JQ3/2/8[1798/3/24]), memorial from Yude, Governor of Zhejiang.

The Confederation's tendency to add increasingly numbers of commanders at the lower level who were not personally selected by the co-founders themselves but instead commissioned by their lieutenants, must have weakened bonds of loyalty. Some of these leaders seem to have paid more attention to the interests of their own vessels than to the obligations owed to fleet leaders, and thereby given rise to squabbles over spoils and privileges. In 1809 the pirates, at the height of victory, turned inward against themselves.²¹

Meanwhile, the hierarchy of command seemed to work for Cai. After a successful raid, the ship and cargo could be held for sale, or for ransom, and the proceeds would go to Cai. What percentage of the plunder individual leaders and their crew retained was not clear, but the fact they did retain a percentage of the plunder was not in dispute.²² At the same time, Cai seemed to have equipped the ships under his command well. On one ship captured by officials, there were nine pieces of cannon made of iron and copper, twenty *jin* of gunpowder, a package (weight unspecified) of bullets, five packets of black lead, fifty-five items of guns, knives, daggers, rattan shields, flags and licences to operate six ships.²³ Later on, as official surveillance became more stringent and as it became increasingly difficult for individual ships to obtain rice, Cai supplied his followers with foodstuffs as well.

The emperor was nervous because pirate leaders like Cai Qian also tended to be anti-dynastic. Manchu officials in the provinces who had more political experience than Ruan Yuan in 1800 were given the task to find out the nature of Cai's organization, the manner of his command, and to see whether Cai harboured dynastic ambitions. Yude reported that Cai's organization was democratic. The pirates addressed each other by name, or as brothers, not by title. The crew sat or squatted, not even rising for Cai when he came among them. At least there was no apparent sign of imperial behaviour on the part of Cai Qian, nor any etiquette for the men to follow.²⁴

Pirates Fleets

At first Cai worked independently, hijacking ships carrying rice and sugar, bargaining with the owners to ransom their goods. Then he joined other pirates to conduct raids on a larger scale. At that time, the pirate ships off the southeast

21. Dian Murray, *Pirates of the South China Coast* (1987), p. 148.

22. Murray, p. 148.

23. GZD-JQ007806 (JQ7/4/8[1802/5/9]), memorial from Ruan Yuan, Governor of Zhejiang.

24. Confession from captured pirates, Memorial from Yude JQ14/1/21.

coast of China were organized into confederations of fleets (*bang* 幫). The largest confederation operating in the waters off Zhejiang was the Fengwei Fleet, under the command of Zhuang Youmei (莊有美).²⁵ The strongest off Fujian was the Shui-ao Fleet, led by Lin Yasun (林雅孫). Lin ventured into Zhuang's territory occasionally, apparently with the latter's consent.²⁶ Each fleet comprised from several score to more than one hundred ships under its command. Smaller fleets like Cai's associated themselves with the Fengwei Confederation from time to time, but were not under the direct control of Zhuang. Another pirate leader active in Zhejiang at that time, Jiang Wenwu, head of the Ruo Huang Fleet had similar arrangements with Zhuang.

These major fleets travelled in deep waters from province to province, raiding commercial shipping as well as official fortifications on shore when local pirates guided them through the coastal inlets. The latter, independent of the major fleets but collaborating with them, usually comprised no more than ten or twenty vessels each. The picturesque names they bore came from the original occupations of their leaders, such as 'Seller of Oil' (Maiyou 賣油) Fleet or 'Mender of Nets' (Buwang 補網) Fleet, or from other sources, nicknames of someone, perhaps, such as 'Small Cat, or, Kitten' (Xiaomao 小貓) Fleet. One of the leaders, Yang Ke (楊科) of the Seller of Oil Fleet, surrendered to official force at Yu Huan in 1802, bringing with him 115 men, 62 iron cannons of Chinese manufacture, and over 160 items of knives and guns.²⁷

Cai's prominence in the pirate hierarchy did not begin until after the summer of 1800, when a severe typhoon, known to contemporary officials as the 'miraculous winds' (*shenfeng* 神風), destroyed the Fengwei and Shui-ao fleets. The remnants of the two fleets tried to continue their raiding activities under a Hou Qitian, until Hou was killed in 1801. Chen Huangkuai, another pirate leader, made an attempt to gather the scattered pirates together to form another fleet. He was not successful so surrendered to the officials in 1805. Chen's followers then joined Cai (see Appendix II).

In 1796 these fleets were strengthened when their leaders began to collaborate with pirates from outside Fujian and Zhejiang. The 'outside pirates' had come from Guangdong and Annam (安南, after 1802 called Vietnam, or Yuenan 越南). Annam was China's nearest neighbour in Southeast Asia. There had been close political, economic, and cultural ties between the two countries since the third century. From time to time China had ruled Annam directly, but Annamese autonomy had been recognized since 986 AD. In 1666 Annam became

25. Jiao Xun, 19:11b.

26. Jiao Xun, 19:11b.

27. GZD-JQ009265 (JQ7/9/19[1892/10/15]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

a tributary state to Qing when a member of the reigning Later Li dynasty (1428–1788) accepted the appointment as King of Annam from the Kangxi Emperor.

Internally the Annamese kept a traditionally Chinese-style family and clan system. As time went on, leadership in large and especially powerful clans did not go unchallenged. In 1788 the Tay-son brothers of the Nguyen clan pronounced one of themselves ruler of Annam, thus beginning the Tay-son Nguyen dynasty. In order to gain income to maintain its uncertain political position, the rulers gave their fleets permission to raid the Chinese coast. The Nguyen rulers also gave permission to certain Chinese pirates Annamese official ranks in exchange for a portion of the plunder. More frequently, the Vietnamese, however, would just supply the local pirates in return for a share of their plunder. Their support made possible the rise of the Fengwei and the Shui-ao Fleets in the East China Sea,²⁸ and, as a corollary, an increase in local bandit activities on land. These fleets were furnished with weapons and ships, the most noted of which was a large vessel which Wei Yuan had termed the *tingchuan* (艇船), but Ruan Yuan had simply called the ‘large ship’ (*dachuan* 大船). It was the design of this class of ships that Ruan Yuan adopted in 1800 to improve the efficiency and mobility of the Zhejiang fleet, making it possible for the Chinese marine force to go on the offensive in the anti-piracy campaigns.²⁹

Qing Coastal Defence

Given the political background of piracy on the coast of Zhejiang and Fujian at the beginning of the dynasty, the Qing government organized the coastal defence units in a way that would be impossible for the force of one province to join another to create any mischief. In Zhejiang, the maintenance of coastal security was the joint responsibility of the Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang, the Governor of Zhejiang, and the Provincial Commander-in-Chief, the highest ranking (1B) official of the Army of the Green Standard or the Old Chinese Army, in the province. Since 1727 there had been a Commander-in-Chief for the Marine Force of the Army of the Green Standard in Zhejiang, with headquarters at Ningbo.³⁰

The Governor-General and the Governor each had marine force units under his own command, but the bulk of the marine units in the province, including

28. GZD-JQ009265.

29. Wei Yuan 8:36.

30. *Qingshigao: Bingji* (清史稿：兵記) 6:18b. The term ‘marine force’ is used here to distinguish this type of defence institution from the modern navy.

the marines, sailors and ships, were under the direction of the Commander-in-Chief. All three officials had the right to memorialize the throne — jointly and individually. For any anti-piracy programme to succeed, all three had to work together in formulating and implementing strategy for battles on land and on water. They also had to provision the forces with equipment, ships, weapons, ammunition, food and other supplies from local resources during the period under our consideration here.

Marine forces in Zhejiang were divided into those patrolling the inland waters and those defending the shores. There were five marine command units in the province. Since pirate attacks during this period occurred mostly in the southern part of the coast, with infrequent incursions into waters near the Zhoushan Archipelago, only three of the five commands of the province were involved in the campaign against the pirates. These commands had their headquarters at Dinghai in the Zhushan Archipelago across from the Qiantang estuary, guarding the northern section of the province and the fishing stations near the islands; at Huangyan on Taizhou Bay in central Zhejiang; and Wenzhou at Wenhou Bay in the south, guarding the open harbours and the numerous islands susceptible to pirate attacks. A Brigade-General (2A) commanded each of these units, under the direction of the provincial Commander-in-Chief. Under their commands were soldiers who guarded the stations, marines who performed combat duty on the ships and received combat pay, and the sailors who operated the vessels.

Ruan Yuan's Anti-Piracy Programmes

Ruan Yuan was familiar with the pirate situation in Zhejiang even before he became governor, for he had served as provincial director of studies (1796–8), and had travelled extensively throughout the province. After the death of Qianlong in February 1799, he was at court where policies and guidelines were established. He had known the content of the imperial edict of 1800 that was intended to strengthen the *baojia* system.³¹ Thus he was cognizant of Jiaqing's thinking on coastal defence. The emperor had written to him during the early days of 1800, 'You know fully well the policy guidelines established by the court against coastal piracy, so there is no need to request detailed instructions.'³² The channel of communication between the two men was open at all times,

31. See Kung-chuan Hsiao, *Rural Control in Nineteenth Century China* (1967), p. 49.

32. Court letter to Ruan Yuan as quoted in 'Draft Biography of Ruan Yuan' with final proof-reading by Zhang Zhidong (張之洞 1837–1909), No. 1266(1).

especially during the critical early stages of the anti-piracy programme. ‘Whenever you feel the need, just send me a secret memorial (*mizou* 密奏),’³³ the emperor penned in vermilion on one of Ruan Yuan’s memorials. It is clear that, although Ruan Yuan was given authority to mobilize civilian and military efforts to implement the anti-piracy programme on the Zhejiang coast, the emperor was expected to be kept informed on every detail of all phases of the operation.

With the backing of the emperor, Ruan Yuan succeeded in putting an end to the pirate menace on the southeast coast of China by adopting the traditional Qing system of maintaining internal security and coastal control and by introducing modifications and innovations as directed by imperial edicts. To strengthen internal security, he reactivated the *baojia* (保甲) system, which registered residents along household and county lines, and made certain that the registration included the fishing population living on boats. This system provided a check on individuals to keep them from joining the pirates or other illegal groups which operated on land. It also served to identify strangers in the communities. Parallel to this system, Ruan Yuan put into effect the *tuanlian* (團練), which organized male adults into local militia to supplement regular troop strength in time of distress. Stringent measures were adopted and enforced to end local residents supplying the pirates. Fortifications along the shores were strengthened with the addition of cannons aimed at preventing pirate ships from approaching land and from entering the river estuaries. Since Ming times, defence units had been established along the coast. The underlying rationale was that, if these strategic points were watched, the villages and towns on the shore would be safe from pirate attacks.³⁴

To modernize the marine force, Ruan Yuan introduced a new class of war vessels based on an Annamese design, providing the Qing force with a class of vessel capable of carrying heavy cannon and battling the pirates on the open sea. As a result, it was possible for the official force to pursue the pirates into open waters and check their raids on maritime shipping. New weapons were also deployed. Local militia of the coastal counties, but not those elsewhere, were trained in the use of muskets (*niaoqiang* 鳥槍). Improved cannon and cannon balls were made available to the marine force. The coastal commands of the provincial marine force in Zhejiang were unified under one official, Li Changeng (李長庚 1750–1808). Li was also made responsible for co-ordinating actions with

33. Vermilion endorsement on GZD-JQ004812 (JQ 5/2/12 [1800/3/7]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

34. Yan Ruyi (嚴如耀), *Haifang Jiyao* (海防輯要), 10:31b–39b.

the force of neighbouring Fujian. Working with military authorities and local officials, as well as with the Governor-General Ruan Yuan was able to accomplish his task before the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, despite interruptions and setbacks.

Baojia

When Ruan Yuan arrived at Zhejiang as Governor, Li was Commander of the Marine Force units at Dinghai. In 1800, on Ruan Yuan's recommendation, he was promoted to be Commander-in-Chief of the marine force of the entire province. The two men worked closely together, planning strategies and executing campaigns. Ruan Yuan spent much of his time at various command posts on the coast. Meanwhile, Governor-General Yude appeared to be indifferent to these efforts. From time to time, he frustrated actions that would have facilitated an earlier ending to the pirate menace.

The Qing adaptation of the tradition system of maintaining local control through the *baojia* — the family and neighbourhood being responsible for the good behaviour of each member, has been discussed by Wen Juntian in *The Baojia System of China* (Zhongguo Baojia Zhidu 中國保甲制度), and in English by T'ung-tsu Ch'ü in *Local Government in China Under the Ch'ing*, and Kung-chuan Hsiao in *Rural China, Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century*. Under this system, 'an apparatus that (was to enable) the government to extend its control beyond the lowest administrative unit, ... (was) on the whole ineffective'.³⁵ From time to time, however, the system was activated for one reason or another. After he assumed power, the Jiaqing Emperor issued an edict directing all provincial level officials to put into effect the *baojia* as a 'means to clip rebellious activities at the source'.³⁶

Except for certain general guidelines, implementation of the system was left to the individual officials in the provinces. They were told to make the regulations clear and easy to follow. A leader of the local gentry, an honest man of integrity outside the government hierarchy, was to be chosen from public nominations to serve as the chief (*jiazhang* 甲長) of the particular unit so that the system could remain outside the control of officials of the lowest echelon. In 1800, twelve regulations were issued to coastal prefects and magistrates who were given the responsibility for operating the *baojia*.³⁷ The villages along the shore and on the

35. T'ung-tsu Ch'ü, *Local Government under the Ch'ing* (1988 edition), p. 151.

36. *Qing Shilu*, JQ58:13b–14b.

islands were also organized into units. For each household, a placard (*pai* 牌) was issued. The placard had to be in public view at all times. On it were listed all residents of the household, with their names, dates of birth, and relationships to the head of the household clearly marked. Any addition or removal of names was to be reported to the chief, and such changes had to be noted on the placard. All expenses for the maintenance of this programme were paid from the public purse.

For the islands, there were additional problems of keeping track of the mobile fishing and seafaring population. Since the Yongzheng reign efforts had been in existence to register the fishing population, in order to keep them from engaging in illegal activities.³⁸ All fishing vessels had to have the names of their home ports and registration numbers carved on each side of the hull, presumably above the waterline for easy visibility. Ten vessels were to constitute a *jia*, the basic unit with collective responsibility for keeping the activities of each vessel and the individuals on it inside the law. This system apparently had not worked effectively as several edicts were issued during the Qianlong reign admonishing the officials and the local leaders for failing to keep the vessels and their activities in check.³⁹

In 1800, Ruan Yuan decided to treat the fishing population who lived on land but worked at sea differently to those who lived on boats. For those who lived on land, certain residents with stationary occupations such as shopkeeping, were designated to serve as guarantors for the good behaviour of the fishermen who came and went with the tides. A separate register was kept in each community to record the name, age and detailed physical description of each individual. For the fishing population living on boats, the name, age, and physical likeness with all distinguishing features of each adult and child were recorded in a register kept by the chief (*qizhang* 旗長) at a designated port where the boat regularly moored or market place where it regularly sold its catch and bought its supplies. Ruan Yuan hoped that through this system of *baojia* all undesirable elements in each community could be identified and be subjected to the full force of the law. The degree of success for these efforts, however, depended on the willingness and ability of local officials to enforce the measures. Actually, since 1753, all seamen travelling out of Deer Harbour (Lugang 鹿港) in Taiwan had been registered by their fingerprints as well as their names, ages, and other usual means

37. YZBT 1:14b.

38. *Huidian Shili* 626:16–22b. See also 'Biancha Yuchuan Baojia Shu' (編查漁船保甲疏) [Memorial on organizing and investigating the *baojia* of fishing boats] by Mai Zhu (邁柱), Governor-General of Hu-Guang, dated Yongzheng 6 (1728), in *Huangchao Jingshi Wenbian*, compiled by Huo, 75:36a–b.

39. *Huidian Shili*, QL 626:16–22b.

of identification.⁴⁰ There is no evidence, however, whether Ruan Yuan used or ignored this method of identification.

Tuanlian

Using the *baojia* registration, rosters of local militia units were formed. The emergence of the training of local male adults (*tuanlian xiangyong* 團練鄉勇) during the early Jiaqing reign as an ‘instrument of rebel suppression’⁴¹ and local control has been analyzed in Philip Kuhn’s studies.⁴² After 1800, this system was brought to the anti-piracy campaigns on the coast from the White Lotus area. Nayancheng used it in Guangdong in 1804–6, and Ruan Yuan adopted it in Zhejiang in 1800.⁴³ An edict was issued in 1800 ordering all officials to organize coastal residents into units to defend their own communities, but Ruan Yuan must have been aware of the emperor’s thinking on the topic before he left Beijing the winter before. As he arrived at Hangzhou, he consulted local officials and used some of them to organize, train, and lead these units. There was a stipulation that ‘a gentry elder of ability’⁴⁴ be chosen to head the local militia. Ruan Yuan saw to it that the men who discharged their responsibilities for the militia well were awarded honorary official titles, such as *xiaolian fangzheng*, thus giving them the right to join the public service if they so chose. At the same time, they could enjoy the prestige of wearing the button of the sixth rank official.⁴⁵

The militia, comprising adult male residents regardless of individual economic and social standing, were supplied with weapons (at that time hand-carried knives and spears) and uniforms with the word ‘Brave’ (*yong* 勇)

40. Memorial from Yuling (d. 1833), Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang, dated Yongzheng 13/10/20 (1735/12/3), as cited in Fang Hao (方豪), ‘Taiwan Caiyong “ji” “dou” Zhishi de Tanta’ (臺灣採用“箕”“斗”之史的探討) [An examination in the history of the utilization of ‘ji’ (箕) and ‘dou’ (斗) in Taiwan], in *Qu Wanli Xiansheng Zhiyong Qinglun Wenji*. Paper presented at the International Ch’ing Archives Symposium (Taipei) 2–6 July 1978. It must be noted here that this means of identification by fingerprints is not to be confused with the modern scientific method of fingerprinting. The whirls on tip of each finger was classified as ‘ji’ or ‘dou’. An individual, then, was identified by the number of the whirls on his hands as well as his other distinguishable physical characteristics.

41. Philip Kuhn, ‘The t’uan-lien defense system at the time of the Taiping Rebellion’, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 27 (1967), p. 219.

42. See the above article. See also *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure 1796–1864* (1970).

43. *Qing Shilu*, JQ 60:23a–b.

44. YZBT 1:7b–8.

45. YZBT 1:7b–8.

emblazoned on front and back, but were not paid a regular stipend for their services. One reason for the institution of this system was that it increased the strength of the community to defend itself without adding to military expenses. The militiamen kept up with their regular jobs, but had to respond whenever the alarm sounded. Any militiaman failing to answer the call had a *cangue* (a combination of neck brace and handcuffs usually made of wood) placed around his neck, designed to bring humiliation as well as discomfort and pain to the offender.

Ruan Yuan had wanted to introduce firearms in training local militia units in Zhejiang, but the emperor gave permission only for the coastal units to use firearm.⁴⁶ During this period, at least some of the coastal militia units turned out to be actually useful in the anti-piracy campaign. In 1800, a unit of local militia was credited with the capture of the Guangdong pirate Wang Guili (王貴利), who, as Lun Guili (倫貴利), had held an Annamese rank.⁴⁷ His capture provided evidence for Qing officials to force the Annamese government to acknowledge its presence in Chinese waters.⁴⁸ Although the Annamese government did not admit to its role in sanctioning pirate activities in Chinese waters, from then on its ships avoided Zhejiang. Two years later, when the Tay-son Nguyen dynasty fell, the new ruler, Nguyen Phuc-Anh (Ruan Fuying in Qing documents), needing Chinese sanction for the legitimacy of his claim to the throne, agreed to cease his government's involvement in piracy off the Chinese coast altogether.

Penalties

Penalties for crimes in aiding and joining the pirates were clearly spelled out in the *Collected Statutes*.⁴⁹ Details of crime and punishment in individual cases were made known further through memorials sent by provincial officials to the emperor. Confessions were sent as enclosures to the memorials, and the essential data on the criminals were incorporated into the texts of the memorials themselves. From Ruan Yuan's memorials it is clear that he had enforced the laws against supplying the pirates in accordance with established Qing traditions. As iron was needed by the pirates for manufacture of conventional hand-

46. GZD-JQ004685 (JQ5/1/7 [1800/1/31]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

47. Wang, originally from Chenghai in Guangdong, adopted Annamese nationality in 1794. As the character Wang as a surname was to be avoided in Annam, his was changed to Lun (倫). Memorial from Ruan Yuan dated JQ5/7/21 (1800/9/9) as cited in YZBT 2:8.

48. YZBT 2:8.

49. *Qinding Daqing Huidian* (1818 edition) JQ 42:22–23b.

carried weapons as well as cannon balls, this metal was deemed by the government as contraband. Skilled ironmongers were also in great demand. At one time, it was discovered that foreign ships docking at Guangzhou were buying as many as 500 iron cooking pots at a time, sometimes even 1,000, an equivalent to 10,000 to 20,000 *jin* of the metal.⁵⁰ Having no doubt whatsoever that these foreign ships were trading with the pirates, thereby supplying their needs, the officials declared iron woks to be contraband as well. In Zhejiang, Ruan Yuan moved all persons handling iron objects, including traders and all ironmongers, into towns where they could be under closer official surveillance.⁵¹

Supplying the pirates with foodstuffs or potassium nitrate (saltpetre), the latter an essential ingredient for gunpowder, was a major crime. Offenders caught were executed immediately. A resident of Zhapu, a Shen Dating, was found by local officials to be in possession of 870 catties of saltpetre after the officials received a tip from authorities in Jiangsu that such an amount of saltpetre was being brought across the Jiangsu-Zhejiang border. Shen, together with another coastal resident, Yao Youxuan, was subsequently discovered to be supplying Cai Qian with five *shi* of rice, receiving fifty silver dollars from Cai in return. Shen and Yao were sentenced to death by strangulation. Hong Fahe, an accomplice, was found guilty of selling one hundred catties of saltpetre, but, not being a principal who dealt directly with the pirates, he was sentenced to one hundred strokes with the cane and to exile for three years. Other accused, including one woman, were found innocent and were discharged.⁵²

At times, persons charged with relatively minor crimes were given capital punishment, yet others managed to escape with less severe sentences. It appears that this flexibility in sentencing depended on whether the prisoners were also suspected to have secret society connections. Members of the Heaven and Earth Society had been involved in banditry, supplying the pirates even before 1799. 'Local secret societies which had formed bands of bandits on land were supplying the pirates with saltpetre and foodstuffs.'⁵³ Dian Murray, in her study on the pirates off the Guangdong coast, maintained that secret society members had found haven among the pirates to escape prosecution on land.⁵⁴ In his memorials

50. *Huidian Shili*, JQ 629:10b. 20,000 *jin* = 266300 lbs = 12,090.90 kg by post-Opium War reckoning.

51. *YZBT* 1:7–8b.

52. GZD-JQ007806; see also Wei Yuan 8:37; *Shilu* JQ 108:15.

53. GZD-JQ001504 (JQ1/11/9 [1796/12/7]), memorial from Kuilun (魁倫), Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang.

54. See Murray, *Pirates of the South China Sea* (1987).

on cases involving the pirates, however, Ruan Yuan made no specific mention of secret society connections.

For captured pirates, there were varying degrees of punishment, depending on the circumstances under which the individual joined the pirate bands and the nature of his service.⁵⁵ A distinction was made between captured victims held by the pirates and those who actually performed services for them. The captive victims were usually freed after questioning by officials, although in certain cases they were considered guilty simply because they were in the company of the pirates at the time of apprehension. Anyone who performed chores that could be considered to be beneficial to the pirates, such as working the tiller or raising the sails of the ships, or taking part in actual raids, was beheaded.⁵⁶ Anyone who performed other minor services not directly connected with piracy, such as washing clothes for the pirates, or cutting their hair, or practising sodomy, was sent into slavery and exile.⁵⁷

A programme was instituted to entice the pirates to surrender by offering them pardons, if they gave up their ships, weapons, and dispersed the band.⁵⁸ In theory, all pirates who surrendered could return freely to their homes. In fact, however, as many of these men were seasoned sailors, or were at least accustomed to living on ships, they were conscripted into the official marine force, which at that time were desperate for personnel. When Ye Ke (葉科) of the Maiyu Fleet surrendered in 1802 to the marine force at Yuhuan, bringing with him 115 men and a considerable quantity of weapons, in accordance with precedence established in the case of the surrender of Zhang Akai the year before, Ruan

55. *Qing Huidian* 784:13b–15b.

56. GZD-JQ007806.

57. GZD-JQ007806.

58. By the Jiaqing reign many of the Green Standard troops were working on a part-time basis only. Therefore, constant efforts had to be exerted by coastal officials to recruit more men as well as building more ships. Yude, as Governor of Zhejiang, requested permission to add forty ships to the marine commands at Wenzhou and thirty each to the commands at Huangyan and Dinghai. Each of these ships was to hold forty fighting marines, a total of 1,600 marines for Wenzhou, 1,200 each for Huangyan and Dinghai. He also made attempts to call together units from all three commands for specific manoeuvres, although he did not go so far as putting them under a joint command. Kuilun, then Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang, sent forces from Fujian from time to time to Zhejiang. Primarily because there was no centrally directed programme to eradicate piracy, and because of the increasing strength of the pirates, the authority of the provincial officials was seriously undermined until Ruan Yuan arrived on the scene with new imperial instructions in 1799. GZD-JQ001864 (JQ2/1/1 [1797/1/28]) and GZD-JQ003699 (JQ3/2/8 [1798/3/24]), memorials from Yude, Governor of Zhejiang.

Yuan accepted this surrender. All the men who so desired and who were qualified, were permitted to repent by joining the marine force, Ruan Yuan told the emperor. Others, 'mostly old men with physical infirmities, were returned to society to earn their own living.'⁵⁹

This programme of pardoning pirates who surrendered was continued until the end of this period of pirate menace. Several minor pirate leaders under Cai Qian surrendered to local authorities at Jinjiang in 1798. Altogether there were fifty-two men, two ships and a quantity of weapons. Imperial pardons were obtained for the men, thirty-three of whom joined the Zhejiang marine force; the rest returned to their native villages.⁶⁰

Vessels

At the turn of the nineteenth century while the pirates were using state-of-the-art vessels and weapons in their raids, the vessels of the Qing marine force were antiquated and cumbersome by comparison. These vessels were mostly adopted from civilian ships used in fishing or coastal trade. From 1728 onwards, commercial ships sailing to Japan and Southeast Asia had to carry their own arms because official forces were not able to protect them.⁶¹ Regulations for war vessels applied to all phases of vessels used by the marine force, including construction, repairs and operation. All vessels used by the marine force in each province — inland as well as in coastal waters — were built in that province. There was one exception, however, the war vessels for Fengtian and Lushun in Manchuria were built in Zhejiang.⁶² Later in the Jiaqing reign, when a battalion of marine force was established in Tianjin in 1817–8, shortly after the British ship that carried Lord Amherst surveyed the Chinese coast from Tianjin to

59. GZD-JQ001864; GZD-JQ003699.

60. Enclosure, GZD-JQ011527 (JQ3/7/16 [1798/8/27]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

61. *Huidian Shili* 629:8b. A maximum of eight muskets, ten sets of bows and arrows and up to twenty *jin* of gunpowder. These weapons had to be registered with customs officials before the ship left port, and accounted for upon return, to make sure they had not been sold to the pirates.

62. *Huidian Shili* 936:2. Regulation was made in 1714. See also JJLF JQ 050797 (JQ22/3/2 [1817/4/17]), Grand Council copy of memorial from Governor-General of Liang-Jiang Sun Yuting (孫玉庭, 1753–1834) requesting that Fujian replace the vessels Jiangsu had to send to Tianjin. The vessels consisted of four large and four small *Tong'an suochuan*. The province also financed the ships, by soliciting contributions from officials and private sources. The hong merchants of Guangzhou paid 100,000 taels towards building the ships for Tianjin. SYD-FB-JQ23/4/27 (1818/5/31), p. 00345.

Guangzhou, the coastal provinces south of Zhili, including Zhejiang, supplied the vessels with cannon⁶³ and one thousand Green Standard marines⁶⁴ as well.

Provincial officials were responsible for the construction and maintenance of war vessels. Qing statutes provided that the governor-general as well as the governor was to inspect the work site to ascertain that all specifications were met and that the materials used were of top quality. After completion, depending on how close the shipyards were to the provincial capital, the governor, the financial and judicial commissioners, were to inspect the vessels on a regular basis and in person.⁶⁵ There were two shipyards in Zhejiang. One was located at Ningbo at the entrance to the Qiantang estuary, and the other at Wenzhou in the south on Wenzhou Bay. Ruan Yuan built a third shipyard in Hangzhou in 1800.

The regulations further specified that war vessels in coastal waters (salt water as distinct from fresh water of the inland rivers and lakes) were to undergo minor repairs the third year after construction, and a major overhaul three years after that. After three more years, they were generally overhauled again, but, if the governor-general and the governor of the province considered the vessels beyond repair, they were demolished to avoid their falling into undesirable hands.⁶⁶ The sails and masts were checked every year and replaced if necessary. Repairs to the vessels were made whenever needed, rather than waiting for the specified period to expire.⁶⁷ In cases where the estimated repair cost exceeded five hundred taels, the emperor had to consent.⁶⁸ Civil officials, in this case the financial

63. JJLF-JQ050993 (JQ22/3/16 [1817/5/1]), Grand Council copy of memorial from Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi Jiang Youxian (蔣攸銑 1766–1830) stating that the number of cannons in Zhejiang and Fujian was insufficient to provide for Tianjin and that the state of weaponry in Guangdong and Guangxi was also poor. Meanwhile, between 60 and 70 cannons weighing between 500 and 3,000 *jin* each were being shipped to Tianjin.

64. JJLF-JQ050980 (JQ22/3/18 [1817/5/3]), Grand Council copy of memorial from Governor of Zhejiang, Yang Hu (楊護), referring to an imperial edict stating that the ‘1,000 men needed to augment the newly established marine force at Tianjin are to be drawn from the marine forces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong’. The commander of this new group was to hold the rank of Brigade-General 2A, and to receive salary and allowances of 551.576 taels and *yanglian* of 15,000 taels annually, the same as those commanding the Jiangsu and Guangdong marine forces. JJLF-JQ050866 (JQ22/3/10 [1817/4/25]), Grand Council copy of joint memorial from Grand Secretaries Dong Gao (董誥), Tuojin (托津) and Cao Zhenyong (曹振鏞), and the presidents and vice-presidents of the Boards of War, Revenue and Works.

65. *Huidian Shili* 936:4.

66. *Huidian Shili* 936:12. See also 936:1a–b. Regulation dated 1690.

67. JJLF-JQ004948 (JQ21/11/1 [1816/12/19]), Grand Council copy of memorial from Jiang Youxian, Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi.

68. GZD-JQ014052 (JQ14/5/9 [1809/6/21]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

commissioner, were responsible for the quality of the materials used in the repairs. He had to consult the governor and the governor-general, however, as they were the ones who memorialized the emperor requesting permission to proceed.⁶⁹

Traditional Vessels in Zhejiang

War vessels built in Zhejiang, like those all along the coast, were conservative in design. As vessels for the Zhejiang marine force were built in Fujian until Qi Jiguang (1528–88) established shipyards in Zhejiang in order to defend the coast against the Wāko in the late Ming, they bore a resemblance to their Fujianese predecessors. Their design remained relatively unchanged since the Ming era, although modifications to suit particular local conditions were made from time to time.

Measurement specifications for four classes of war vessels of the Yongzheng reign (1723–35) were given in the *Collected Statutes*.⁷⁰ Other sources, such as the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Zhejiang* and the *Draft History of the Qing Dynasty*, further clarified these classifications. General descriptions of the vessels making them easier to visualize by the layman, however, are not so readily available, and had to be culled from several diverse sources. Even then, they are not satisfactory. There are sketches and drawings of certain classes of vessels in Ming publications such as *Wubai Zhi* (武備志) [Book of military equipment and weapons]. Others are found in assorted places such as *The Junks and Sampans of the Yangtze*, an English-language publication of the twentieth century on Chinese sailing vessels. The Qing archives yielded a water colour drawing of the *Tong'an suochuan*.⁷¹

The war vessels along the Zhejiang coast during this period comprised those for fighting and for reconnaissance. Ruan Yuan described one class of fighting vessels, the *mengchongzhanchuan* (蒙衝戰船), as 'a prototype of an ancient seagoing commercial vessel adopted for war use'.⁷² The *mengchong*, originally from Fujian, was adopted for use in Zhejiang, and then in Guangdong. It was a vessel of a single mast and sail. On top of the mast there was a cage made of rattan and covered in cowhide to hold three to four marines. Together with the fact that the *mengchong* could be propelled by oars as well as by sail, thus less visible to the pirates, it was used primarily for sneak attacks. No specification for this class of vessels was listed in the *Collected Statutes*.

69. *Huidian Shili* 936:2b.

70. See also *Huidian Tu Shili* (會典圖事例) 936:4b. Regulation dated 1728.

71. JJLFJQ050792 and 050793, no date, found in packets dated JQ 22/1 second half month (first half of March 1817).

72. Ruan Yuan, *Guangdong Tongzhi* (廣東通志) (1822) (Guangzhou edition, 1864), 124:51b–2.

For regular fighting the Zhejiang marine force relied upon the *shaochuan* (哨船) (cruiser). There were several designs of this class of craft in *Wubei Zhi*, illustrated with fully armed marines ready for combat. Originally from Wenzhou, it was made of hardwood, thus had the ‘strength of iron’.⁷³ The vessel boasted three decks, the upper for fighting, the lower to store heavy stone ballast and the middle as crew quarters. The *Collected Statutes* precedents gave the measurement for a vessel of this class to be 1 *zhang* 4 *chi* (for the beam), 4 *zhang* 8 *chi* (in length), and 5 *chi* (depth of cabin).⁷⁴ Therefore, at approximately fifty feet from bow to stern, the ship did not appear to be a large one.

Another design of the *shaochuan* class was adapted from fishing vessels of Taiping (太平) on Taizhou Bay. In the early days of its adaptation as a war vessel, the pirates used to confuse it with civilian fishing vessels even without camouflage. These vessels were especially useful as they could chase after the pirate ships beyond the coast, but they could only carry handheld weapons such as spears and knives, and were not effective in battles involving firearms.

For fighting in the shallow waters with sandy bottom in northern Zhejiang, a flag-bottomed craft, the *sha chuan* (沙船), was useful because it could withstand the strong undertow peculiar to this region. It was not usable in the waters of southern Zhejiang where deep water and high waves would capsize it easily. The rocky bottom also made it impossible for this craft to drop its iron anchor. The craft was propelled by two sails, and its open deck was used as a base for battle. The weapons it carried tended to be the handheld variety. Sometimes attempts were made to install a cannon at the bow of the ship, but most of the time these attempts were not successful.

In 1851, fifty categories of war vessels in nine coastal provinces were listed in the *Chinese Repository*.⁷⁵ A conjecture can be made here that since these ships were in use during the Ming dynasty and after the Opium War, they were in existence continuously, including the period of Ruan Yuan’s anti-piracy campaigns from 1799 to 1809. Ships belonging to nine of these categories were found in Zhejiang, including the *ganzeng chuan* (趕繒船). Measurement specifications for this class of war vessels were given in the *Collected Statutes*, but there was no description or picture of the ships themselves. The *Chinese Repository* identified the *zengchuan* as vessels with nets and *ganzeng chuan* as chasers.⁷⁶ Assuming that these definitions were correct, a conclusion can be drawn that the *ganzeng chuan*

73. *Guangdong Tongzhi* 116:4.

74. *Huidian Tu Shili* 936: 4b.

75. *Chinese Repository* XX: 379 (Guangzhou, July 1851).

76. *Chinese Repository* XX:379.

was a chaser with nets which the marines could throw at the pirate ships, either to disable the pirates or to entangle the mechanism of their ships. In this case, then, the *ganzeng chuan* would probably be a version of the fishing vessels adopted for military use. Sixteen different sub-classifications for this class of vessels were given in a collection of Qing dynasty war vessel regulations for the province of Fujian.⁷⁷ Assuming that the Zhejiang version was similar, the vessel would be larger than both the fishing vessels adopted for marine use.

In 1799, the court announced new guidelines for all coastal officials to improve the effectiveness of their marine force by modernizing the construction of their ships. Changling (長齡 1748–1838), a noted general and statesman, who was Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi in 1802, built one hundred rice ships (*michuan* 米船) for official use, financing this project out of the *yanglian* funds of the province.⁷⁸ These ships were more manoeuvrable than official ships then in use. Furthermore, their capacity to carry up to six thousand *dou* of rice each and their flat decks meant that heavy cannon could be installed.

The court instructed other provinces to follow Guangdong's example by building rice ships for marine use. The *Tong'an sochuan* probably had represented an earlier effort at modernizing its marine force. This class of ships was more advanced than the rice ships because they were especially built to carry heavy cannon. The *Draft History of the Qing Dynasty* did not record the construction of any such vessel in Zhejiang, but it contained the passage that 'in 1800 there was an order to discontinue building the *zhanchuan* in favour of constructing the *Tong'an sochuan* in its stead'⁷⁹ in Fujian. Apparently a similar order was also sent to Zhejiang, for Yude, the governor-general of the two provinces at that time, wrote to complain to the emperor that he was having difficulty finding enough lumber in Fujian to build twenty such ships for Zhejiang as well.⁸⁰

These ships, for the use of the Zhejiang marine force, were built in Zhejiang although the materials had to be brought from Fujian. The hull was constructed from a single piece of timber, whereas that for the vessels of traditional Chinese design was in three sections. Li Changgen, whom Ruan Yuan trusted, was responsible for the selection and transportation of the material as well as the construction of the ships. A new shipyard was opened in Hangzhou to supplement the two existing Zhejiang shipyards at Ningbo and Wenzhou.

77. *Qinding Fujiansheng Waihai Zhanchuan Celie* (欽定福建省外海戰船則例) (1961).

78. GZD-JQ005272 (JQ 5/3/4 [1800/3/28]), memorial from Yude, Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang; See also *Qing Shilu*, JQ58:11.

79. *Qingshigao: Bingzhi* (清史稿：兵志) 6:20.

80. GZD-JQ005272.

Ruan Yuan's Large Ship

Meanwhile, Ruan Yuan had arrived in Zhejiang by the end of that year and had discovered the existence of the large ships based on an Annamese design. He immediately gave top priority to the construction of these ships. He believed that the availability of these ships to the pirates was an important reason for the success of their fleets. The ships were three to four times the size of the average official ship then in use, and the decks were much taller, so that the pirates had an advantage over the marines as they could charge from above. These ships were covered with cowhide and nets, so that they were resistant to cannon fire, at that time not of overwhelming strength. The ships were also equipped with heavier cannon, with a capacity to fire more powerful cannon balls.⁸¹ The heaviest cannon ball used by the official forces weighed about one *jin*, whereas those used by the pirates were thirteen to fourteen times the weight.⁸² Implications were that damages inflicted by the pirates could be thirteen to fourteen times more serious. Confronted by a flotilla of over two hundred pirate ships in the waters off Wenzhou in 1800, the official fleet was able to escape total annihilation only because dusk had set in and the pirates could not see any more.⁸³

A pirate leader surrendered in the winter of 1799–1800, bringing with him two large ships.⁸⁴ The officials were overjoyed because they had a model to copy. Ruan Yuan wanted to build one hundred such ships right away, but the emperor thought that thirty to forty would be what the province could afford. ‘The construction and fitting out of 30 ships alone could cost tens of thousands of taels of silver,’⁸⁵ the emperor was recorded to have remarked. The average for material and labour for each ship was actually 2,669 taels. The total cost of 80,099 taels for thirty ships had to be raised locally by Yude and Ruan Yuan.⁸⁶ The final accounting showed that 47,000 taels were taken out of the *yanglian* funds of Zhejiang; 12,711 taels were drawn from unspent funds released when construction of the *Tong'an suochuan* was suspended; and the rest came from merchants in the coastal region of the province. The salt merchants contributed 100,000 taels, sufficient to cover the remaining 20,388 taels needed for the ships, and, in

81. GZD-JQ004685.

82. GZD-JQ004685.

83. GZD-JQ004685.

84. GZD-JQ005272.

85. *Yingzhou Bitan* 2:2b.

86. Court Letter to Yude and Ruan Yuan, dated JQ5/1/24 [1800/2/17]. See also GZD-JQ 004948.

addition, to pay for 418 cannons for the ships and the coastal forts.⁸⁷ The value of this vessel to the success of the anti-piracy campaign was recognized by contemporary writers such as Wei Yuan. It was this class of vessel, in conjunction with the smaller traditional classes of vessels strategically deployed that defeated Cai Qian in 1809. The only information available from contemporary sources was that it carried 80 hands. There is, however, in an English-language publication on Chinese vessels, *The Junks and Sampans of the Yangtze*, a ‘contemporary plan, probably the only one of its kind (of a) ta-ping-ch’uan [*dabing chuan* (大兵船), large soldier boat],’⁸⁸ defined as ‘a typical sea-going junk of the early nineteenth century (used by the Chinese marine force to combat piracy on the sea coast).’⁸⁹ This plan shows the large ship to be 120 feet in length, 25.6 feet at the beam, with a depth of 12 feet — certainly taller and larger than even the largest *Tong’an suochuan* shown by the sketches found in the Qing archives. Successful as these large ships were, they were not useful against the pirates who wove in and out of the coastal inlets and bays. In 1808, Ruan Yuan devised a plan to deploy the large ships against Cai Qian and his collaborator Zhu Fen (d. 1809), the Guangdong pirate leader, but used smaller ships of traditional designs to eliminate the other pirates.

Weapons

The weapons used by the marine force at that time were also antiquated. They included such items as iron daggers, bamboo and wooden spears with or without iron prongs for hand combat; and, for defence, rattan and wooden shields held by hand. Nets were tightly drawn above the deck of the ships so that their elasticity would repel incoming missiles. Muskets were carried by marines and coastal militiamen at that time, but they were limited in number. There were even few cannons. Cannon had been adopted for use in China since the Ming dynasty when they were purchased from foreign manufacturers.⁹⁰ Towards the end of the Ming, the Chinese began to manufacture cannon. In 1624, the Ming court asked Adam Schall von Bell, a Dutch missionary, to teach the Chinese the technology of casting cannon. The Manchus, who had not used firearm until

87. GZD-JQ011333 (JQ13/6/26 [1808/8/17]), memorial from Ruan Yuan. The local gazetteer of Dinghai credits Ruan Yuan with raising ‘more than 10,000 taels to build large ships for Li Changkeng to chase Cai Qian into the oceans’, *Dinghai Xianzhi* (定海縣誌) 15: 10b–14, compiled by Chen Xunzheng (陳訓正).

88. Worcester, *Junks and Sampans of the Yangtze* (1948), p. 350.

89. Worcester (1948), p. 350.

90. Zhou Wei, *Zhongguo Bingqi Shigao* (Beijing, 1957), p. 313.

they entered China Proper in 1636, adopted the cannon for land forces, but, until the turn of the nineteenth century, did not appear to have used them on ships.

In addition to new weaponry and ships of foreign design, Ruan Yuan recognized the superiority of foreign made cannon and cannon balls to those manufactured by the Chinese. The cannon used by the Qing forces were not marine cannon, but field and artillery pieces cast of iron. As the bores were small and were not drilled smooth, the distance and accuracy of the fire were greatly hampered. On the ships, these cannons were battened down with rattan on blocks of wood, reducing their effectiveness even further.⁹¹ The foreign made cannon (*tongpao* 銅砲) made of copper, were more effective in accuracy and distance than those made by the Chinese. Whenever Ruan Yuan managed to get his hands on those foreign made copper cannon, mostly from pirates who surrendered, he distributed them among the various units of Zhejiang's marine forces.

At least once he went into considerable trouble to obtain one such cannon. The cannon, weighing 2,000 *jīn* (roughly 2,550 lb or 1,209 kg) had sunk to the bottom of 200 *chǐ* (234 feet or 71.3 metres) of water off the Bay of Wenzhou when an Annamese ship carrying it was destroyed. By applying the Archimedes Principle, a diver with ropes tied the cannon to eight boats which he filled and emptied with stones in succession until the cannon was surfaced and put to use.⁹² Ruan Yuan also adopted the 'butterfly cannon ball' (*hu die pao zi* 蝴蝶砲子)⁹³ from the Annamese. The shell of this cannon ball was made of copper. The two halves, about 4–5 *cun* (about 5–6 inches or 15–16 centimetres) in diameter, were linked together by a chain of 2 *chǐ* in length. When the two halves were put together the chain was coiled, then the space filled with molten lead. When the ball was fired from the cannon, the two halves, separated by the explosion, with the chain in the middle extended to its full length, would fly at high speed and break whatever came in contact with it. Ruan Yuan found the butterfly cannon ball 'highly satisfactory against any ship with a mast'.⁹⁴

91. *Chinese Repository* V: 167 (1836).

92. 'Ji Ren Shaocai' (記任邵才) [In recognition of Ren Shaocai] by Ruan Yuan, in *YJS*/III: 4:25b–26b. I am grateful to my father, the late Dr Hsioh-ren Wei (1899–1987), scientist and educator, for recognizing Ruan Yuan's application of the Archimedes Principle in refloating the sunken cannon. Dr Wei also noted that in 1978 the same principle was applied to refloat a similar cannon off the coast of Malaysia, although large oil drums were used instead of boats, and liquid weights were used instead of stones. Letter dated 8 January 1979.

93. 'Ji Hutie Paozi' (記蝴蝶砲子) [Noting the butterfly cannon ball] by Ruan Yuan, in *YJS*/III: 4: 26b–7. I am grateful to a member of the Harvard class of 1952, who served as an officer in the American navy on duty in the Mediterranean during the 1950s, but whose name I unfortunately cannot recall, for the information that this type of cannon ball had originated in Turkey.

94. *YJS*/III: 4:26b–7.

Campaign against Cai Qian

In June 1802 Cai Qian was much weakened, with only four ships under his command. By August, however, he had managed to amass a fleet of more than forty ships by working with smaller fleets like the Maiyu Fleet under Yang Ke. They were relentlessly pursued by forces under the command of Li Changgeng, which at that time had been reinforced by the large ships. By the beginning of 1803 Cai Qian was at his weakest. Tattered, he surrendered to Yude in Fujian, on the condition that the governor-general would protect him from the Zhejiang marine forces. Under normal circumstances, the Zhejiang marine forces would not be able to enter the waters of Fujian, but the emperor had just told Ruan Yuan to organize a unified command of the marine forces of the two provinces.⁹⁵ After bribing local officials and shipbuilders in Fujian, Cai was able to obtain two ships and escape to Taiwan where he regrouped his forces. Within a few months, he recovered sufficient strength to venture in Zhejiang waters again, and, by August 1803, he commanded more than thirty ships once more. In July 1804 Cai Qian was joined by pirate fleets from Guangdong. His strength was sapped by official forces under Li Changgeng, but somehow he always managed to obtain enough men and supplies to recover.

Lack of Support from Manchu Officials

From 1805 to 1808, when Ruan Yuan was away from Zhejiang observing the mourning period after the death of his father in Yangzhou, Li did not enjoy the confidence of Manchu officials in the provinces. Originally, under the unified command, Li was to have total control over the deployment of all coastal defence units including those on shore, but in policy matters he had to consult with the governor-general, Yude, and later Alinbao, both administrators of ordinary competence and questionable integrity, as well as with the governor of Zhejiang, Qing'antai (清安泰 d. 1809). Yude appeared to have disagreed with Ruan Yuan's handling of the anti-piracy programme at times, but nevertheless had to toe the line because of the emperor's support for Ruan Yuan.⁹⁶ He had opposed the choice of Li Changgeng as commander-in-chief of the Zhejiang forces in 1801 in

95. *Yingzhou Bitan* 2:7.

96. For instance, Yude showed his reluctance to supply Ruan Yuan by stating in a memorial. 'It is difficult to obtain lumber, especially the long pieces needed for the large ships. After searching for over two months all through Taiwan and Fujian, enough timber for four or five ships has been found. We are now waiting for the spring rains to swell the rivers so that the timber can be sent down from the mountains where the trees were felled.' GZD-JQ005272. The tone used was not one of enthusiastic support for Ruan Yuan and his shipbuilding plan.

the first place, on the grounds that Li was ‘careless and frivolous and might not be able to shoulder the responsibilities for the marine force of an entire province’,⁹⁷ whereas subsequently Li proved to be one of the most able commanders of the Qing marine forces. After Ruan Yuan left Zhejiang in 1805 to go into mourning, Yude discontinued the construction of the large ships, and he did not make use of the unified command.

Yude had further undermined the pirate eradication efforts by allowing the escape of Cai Qian when he held back Li’s forces and kept him from attacking Cai in 1803. Cai was able to retreat to Taiwan with the ships he bought from a Fujian shipbuilder and recover. Cai felt at home in Taiwan because more than half of the Chinese settlers on the island, under the jurisdiction of the governor of Fujian, had originally come from Fujian — Quanzhou, Zhangzhou and Chaozhou, whose dialects and traditions were the same as Cai’s.⁹⁸ In fact, a pirate confession extracted by officials in 1806 had shown that at this time Cai was ‘ready to give up the perilous life on the sea to settle down in Taiwan’.⁹⁹ It does not mean that Cai stopped being a threat to internal security, however. In 1806, he was showing signs of rebellious tendencies. He began to call himself ‘King to Pacify the Oceans’ (Zhen Hai Wang 鎮海王) and started a campaign to recruit ‘unlawful elements on land to join him in his ventures’.¹⁰⁰ There were also reports that Cai was ‘donning imperial gowns, establishing a bureaucracy’ and was generally behaving along the same lines as Lin Shuangwen (林爽文), who had staged a rebellion earlier.

Yude was dismissed from office in 1808. His successor, Alinbao, upon arriving at Fuzhou, sent to the emperor a series of memorials accusing Li Changgeng of incompetence, cowardice and grossly exaggerating the extent of his encounters with the pirates. The emperor, though refusing to give credence to the charges, nevertheless ordered Qing’antai (清安泰) to investigate them. Li was exonerated but Manchu officials in the area continued to resent the successes made by the Chinese officials. When Ruan Yuan returned to Zhejiang in 1808 he resumed the leadership in the anti-piracy campaign. Li Changgeng had been killed by then, but Ruan Yuan worked well with his successor Qiu Lianggong (邱良功 1771–1827) and his Fujian counterpart Wang Delu (王德祿 1771–1842). The major new element in Ruan Yuan’s anti-piracy programme after 1808 was in concentrating the large ships against the Cai fleet, and in using the smaller, conventional crafts against the local pirates, who were supplying Cai.

97. *Guochao Qixian Leizheng Chubian* compiled by Li Xun (1884), 186:7b.

98. Wei Yuan, 8.

99. Enclosure in a memorial dated JQ 11/7/7, as quoted in Ji (1982), pp. 58–67.

100. Memorial from Yude dated JQ10/12/26, as quoted in Ji, pp. 58–67.

Cai Qian's Defeat

Cai's eventual defeat marked the success of Ruan Yuan's policy in isolating him from his suppliers. Ruan Yuan also sent infiltrators into the pirate camps to spread rumours so that pirate leaders who were about to desert Cai could have doubts as to whether Cai was as strong as he was purported to be.¹⁰¹ By the autumn of 1809, Cai was isolated and his situation was desperate. In September his ships had to use silver coins as fodder since they had exhausted their ammunition.¹⁰² After his death, the pirate threat to the Zhejiang coast ended. Cai was a major menace to coastal shipping for almost a decade. His rise and fall revealed the successes and failures of the Qing anti-piracy programme at that time.

Concluding Comments

As coastal piracy was a traditional problem for Chinese officials, it was possible for Ruan Yuan, diligently and conscientiously employing traditional Qing policies of internal control and coastal defence, and adding innovations when they were useful, to deal with it successfully. On the other hand, even though he had begun instituting measures as soon as he arrived in Zhejiang during the winter of 1799–1800, pirate menace continued for another decade. Although the *baojia* and *tuanlian* might not have enjoyed universal success, Ruan Yuan, at least, was able to use them to some degree of effectiveness. His intellectual curiosity and desire to find practical solutions to concrete problems led him to adopt the new ship design, and new weapons from foreign sources, to enable Chinese forces to take an active role in coastal defence. He enjoyed support at court, especially that of the reigning emperor, that enabled him to put through the programme of unified marine command to apprehend Cai Qian. His family background, perhaps, had also equipped him with an understanding of military language and an interest in strategy and manoeuvres.

The failure to catch Cai Qian during Ruan Yuan's first five years in Zhejiang could not be blamed on the incompetence of the Manchu officials alone, for it was not until the strategy to handle Cai Qian and his local collaborators separately that Ruan Yuan was able to eliminate them one by one. One major reason for this success might be the fact that Jiaqing was supporting this centrally directed programmes to fight coastal piracy. He appointed zealous and able officials like

101. *Yingzhou Bitan* 2:7.

102. *Yingzhou Bitan* 2:7.

Ruan Yuan to Zhejiang, and Bai Ling to Guangdong. Unfortunately, although the emperor and his officials were able to remove the pirate threat, the conditions which led men into piracy remained uncorrected. The restiveness of the populace continued to be a source of disturbance to law and order throughout the Jiaqing reign.

5

Internal Security and Local Control: Investigations of Secret Societies in Jiangxi, 1814–1816, and Guangxi, 1817–26

My objective in this chapter is not to analyze the Chinese secret societies from a historical, or economic, or even social perspective. Recent scholarly studies in Chinese as well as in foreign languages, all based on archival documents, have already enlightened readers on the origin and development of the secret societies of the mid-Qing era. My intention here is to show how Ruan Yuan saw them as he discharged his responsibilities as Governor of Jiangxi. His observations on secret society activities and his interrogation of the perpetrators, as shown in his memorials to the throne, was seen by him as an issue of security and control. These activities continued to be of major concern for the central government and officials in the provinces. Jiangxi was a strategic province in 1814 and Ruan Yuan was the man on the spot. It is fortunate that a large number of Ruan Yuan's memorials, with imperial rescripts, are available for this study.

Recent Scholarly Studies on Chinese Secret Societies

It is also fortunate that recent scholarly studies on secret societies in China are generally available. David Ownby gave a detailed analysis on Chinese scholarship in his 'Recent Chinese Scholarship on the History of Chinese Secret Societies'.¹ Works cited here, for instance by Zhou Yumin (周育民) on the Mainland, and Zhuang Jifa (莊吉發) in Taiwan, have proved invaluable to enable me to put the work of Ruan Yuan during this period into the proper historical context.² In addition, other Chinese scholars who worked on the secret societies include Dai Xuanzhi (戴玄之).³ The English-language sources are also extremely important,

1. See *Late Imperial China* 22:1 (June 2001), pp. 139–58.

2. Zhou Yumin (周育民) and Shao Yong (邵庸), *Zhongguo Banghui Shi* (中國幫會史) (1993); Zhuang Jifa (莊吉發), *Qingdai Mimi Huidang Shi Yanjiu* (清代秘密會黨史研究) (1994) and a myriad of other publications on the topic. For detailed information, see Bibliography II.

3. Dai Xuanzhi (戴玄之), 'Tiandihui Mingcheng de Yanbian' (天地會名稱的演變) (1976).

especially for interested historians who do not read Chinese. The scholars added their knowledge and insight to findings by previous scholars, and produced extremely useful treatises on Chinese secret societies from the mid-Qing to the twentieth century. These scholars include Jean Chesneaux, Frederic Wakeman, Dian Murray, David Ownby and Mary Somers Heidhues, and Barend J. Ter Haar.⁴

Ruan Yuan Appointed to Jiangxi

During Ruan Yuan's brief tenure as governor of Jiangxi 1814–6, his greatest anxiety came from the secret societies which were becoming increasingly active at that time.⁵ Ruan Yuan investigated several organized brotherhoods, some of which had been clearly affiliated with the Heaven and Earth Society (Tiandihui 天地會). Secret societies continued to trouble him after he was moved to Canton as Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi in 1816. His initial reluctance to view these brotherhoods as seditious, and therefore his refusal to handle all cases as problems of internal security threatening the dynasty, had brought him imperial censure from both the Jiaqing and the Daoguang emperors. At first he considered the societies to be criminal gangs formed to engage in extortion and other illegal activities rather than as seditious organizations. This view was contrary to that held by Jiaqing, who wrote to reprimand Ruan Yuan on his laxity in 1815.⁶ The

4. Jean Chesneaux, *Mouvements Populaires et Secret Sociétés en Chine aux XIX et XX Siècle* (1970). Frederic Wakeman, 'Rebellion and Revolution: The Study of Popular Movements in Chinese History' (1977). David Ownby and Mary Heidhues (eds.), *'Secret Societies' Reconsidered* (1993). Dian Murray and Qin Baoqi, *The Origins of the Tiandihui* (1994). David Ownby, *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in Early and Mid-Qing China* (1996). Barends J. ter Haar, *Ritual and Mythology of the Chinese Triads* (1998). For detailed information, see Bibliography III.

5. Ruan Yuan was appointed Governor of Jiangxi on 1 May 1814, but did not arrive at Nanchang until 17 September 1814. *Diziji* 4:13. His transfer to Hunan was announced on 12 August 1816, but he did not leave Jiangxi until his successor arrived on 7 October 1816. *Diziji*, 5:7b. During his tenure he sent a total of sixty-four memorials with twenty-one enclosures to the emperor, JJLF-JQ019639 (JQ 11/4/29 [1817/6/15]). Copies of correspondence between Ruan Yuan and the Grand Council are also in the collection of Qing documents at the First Historical Archives in Beijing. There are eighty-two documents on the Heaven and Earth Society, at least fifty-five of which are on Zhu Maoqi. Microfilm #122. Seven Grand Council copies of memorials from Ruan Yuan (four as Governor of Jiangxi, one as Governor-General of Huguang and two as Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi) are reprinted in the collection of archival documents on the Heaven and Earth Society compiled by the People's University Institute of Qing History, *Tiandihui* (Heaven and Earth Society 天地會) vol. 6, pp. 351–64; vol. 7, pp. 381–9.

6. Court letter to Ruan Yuan as cited in GZD-JQ019639 (JQ20/8/22 [1815/10/24]), memorial from Ruan Yuan, Governor of Jiangxi.

emperor had seen the danger these societies represented. He was aware of the possibility that this underground network could provide a skilful political agitator with a ready organization to spread anti-dynastic activities among the populace. Thus, censors as well as officials in neighbouring provinces were alerted to keep Ruan Yuan on his toes.⁷ As a result, Ruan Yuan revised his stand and treated these groups as potential threats to internal security, but, in general, appeared to have insisted on making a distinction between ordinary criminal groups and secret societies with connections beyond Jiangxi.

Materials on Ruan Yuan's handling of this problem from his Canton period were insufficient to discern a policy on the issue, but it was clear that the Daoguang Emperor, like his father, had not been satisfied with Ruan Yuan's efforts in this area when he wrote in 1821:

You have been in Guangdong and Guangxi for several years already. Why haven't you reported more on the activities of the secret societies? Or, are you choosing to ignore the problem because it is too difficult for you to handle? You owe a great deal to my late imperial father. If, at this stage of your career you turn out to be incapable of fulfilling my trust by failing to control lawlessness and maintain peace and security for the people, (if I were you) I would really be worried about what might happen to the good reputation you now enjoy.⁸

Heterodox Sect and Secret Society Traits Found in Jiangxi

The province of Jiangxi was situated at the crossroads between the Central China provinces of Hunan and Hubei where White Lotus uprisings originated, and the South China provinces of Fujian and Guangdong where there had been a resurgence of secret society activities since the middle of the Qianlong reign. It was here that the adoption of certain traits of the White Lotus Sect by the Heaven and Earth Society was first noticed.⁹ By 1851, a decade after the end of the Opium

7. The Jiaqing Emperor told Ruan Yuan about the surveillance in a memorial from the censor Xiong Chi (熊桴) quoted in a court letter to Ruan Yuan, GZD-JQ017851 (JQ20/2/14 [1815/3/24]), memorial from Ruan Yuan; and a memorial from Bailing (百齡), Governor-General of Liang Jiang, quoted in a court letter.

8. The emperor's letter was quoted in full in GZD-DG000013 (DG1/2/2 [1821/3/5]), memorial from Ruan Yuan, and GZD-JQ018874 (JQ20/6/7 [1915/7/13]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

9. Zhuang Jifa (莊吉發), 'Qingdai Jiaqing Nianjian de Tiandihui' (清代嘉慶年間的天地會), *Shih-huo Monthly* (食貨月刊) VIII:6:2 (1978), p. 67. Jiaqing had told Ruan Yuan earlier that the eradication of the White Lotus rebels was top priority for the court. Court letter to Ruan Yuan and Yude, JXD-JQ5/1/21 (1800/2/14). See also GZD-JQ004948.

War, the Society was openly active in Hunan.¹⁰ Ruan Yuan's appraisal as to how Jiangxi fitted into the framework of the secret society movement was reported to the emperor in 1815. He wrote that Jiangxi was 'an interior province bordering on the White Lotus area of Hunan and Hubei on one side, and on the other Fujian and Guangdong where the Heaven and Earth Society was active.'¹¹ Together with this observation he expressed the fear that the activities of the secret societies in Jiangxi could not be easily suppressed because 'the impenetrable mountainous terrain in the eastern and southern sectors of the province made law enforcement difficult.'¹² Despite the recognition of the strategic location of the province, neither the court nor Ruan Yuan mounted any massive campaign against the Heaven and Earth Society in Jiangxi. Evidently the dangers presented by the Society were not considered sufficiently immediate to warrant more than routine policing between 1814 and 1816.¹³

After the suppression of a final Ming loyalist uprising in Taiwan in 1683, anti-Manchu resistance went underground in the form of secret societies. These organizations continued their operations in concealment from the officials throughout the Kangxi and Yongzheng reigns. As time went on, the fervour of their original anti-Manchu zeal abated and their membership and activities declined to dormancy. In the middle of the eighteenth century, these societies began to be active once more.¹⁴ Although they purported to be inheritors of the Ming loyalist mantle, much of their activities were criminal rather than seditious.

By the second decade of the nineteenth century, secret organizations with grassroot membership had broadened their areas of operation beyond the confines of the province of Fujian where they had originated. In South China, following the tradition of social organizations of the lower economic and social strata, these underground organizations called themselves 'societies' (*hui* 會).¹⁵

10. GZD-Xianfeng 003834 (XF 3/4/19 [1853/5/26]), as cited in Zhuang Jifa, 'Qingmo Tiandi Huiyu Taiping Tianguo Zhiyu' [The Heaven and Earth Society at the end of the Qing dynasty and Taiping Rebellion], *Continental Magazine* (大陸雜誌) (1979), 59:1:15–26.

11. GZD-JQ016925 (JQ19/11/17 [1814/12/28]), memorial from Ruan Yuan. See also *Diziji* 5:1.

12. *Diziji* 5:1.

13. Soldiers in plain clothes were sent to various communities to investigate possible secret society activities. Results of their findings were reported to the emperor. See, for instance, JLF-JQ049694 (JQ 21/11/23 [1817/1/10]) and JLF-JQ049756 (JQ21/11/28 [1817/1/15]).

14. 'The Heaven and Earth Society began its (latest anti-dynastic) activities in the 32nd year (1767) of the Qianlong reign.' Court letter to Li Shiyao (李侍堯), Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang, as cited in GZD-QL050274 (QL52/2/7 [1787/3/25]), memorial from Li Shiyao. See also Murray and Qin (1994) and Ownby (1996), *passim*.

15. For a detailed analysis of 'hui' (會) in English, see Ownby, *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies* (1996), pp. 34–67.

It was this corporate type of secret organizations that spread beyond the Chinese mainland into Southeast Asia (Nanyang 南洋), where, by that time, there was a large Chinese population.¹⁶

In North and Central China, underground organizations styled themselves 'sect' (*jiao* 教). Unlike the secret societies of South China, they were originally heterodox religious sects with anti-establishment attitudes but no political pretensions. In 1796, however, the White Lotus Sect (Bailian jiao 白蓮教) began an anti-Qing rebellion, which, within a few years, had expanded all over Central China. Although this sect was quite different in orientation from the secret societies of the South, and although this rebellion was totally subdued in 1805, the fact that the rebels were able to resist government forces for almost a decade gave impetus to the restive populace to join organizations offering similar allure. The successes of the White Lotus Sect in attracting a wide-range following, and in getting the uprisings off the ground, led secret societies in South China to adopt its surface attributes and its operational tactics. This general, but not yet universal, adoption of the White Lotus pattern by secret societies first came to light in Jiangxi during Ruan Yuan's tenure as governor, when officials discovered the existence of a local Heaven and Earth Society group which had selected as its patron Ma Chaozhu (馬朝祖), a White Lotus leader of the Qianlong era, who spoke about a new ruler by the name of Zhu who would come 'with a large army to conquer China and restore the Ming dynasty'.¹⁷

Shortly thereafter, secret societies in China everywhere appeared to share certain distinctive features reflecting their quasi-religious and quasi-political characteristics. Following the tradition of the White Lotus, the leader of each group claimed to be an 'agent or personification of Maitreya',¹⁸ the messiah Buddha who was to espouse the expansion of Buddhism and to usher in its ultimate universal victory. The leader would also prophesy a new world order under which the follower would enjoy, right here on earth, better status and conditions than he had under the existing order. To strengthen further the claim to legitimacy of the movement, the leader would be hailed as a descendant of the imperial house of a previous Chinese dynasty. The surname of the ruling house of the Ming dynasty, Zhu (朱), was the one most frequently used by society

16. Dai Xuanzhi (戴玄之), 'Tiandihui Mingcheng de Yanbian' (天地會名稱的演變), *Nanyang University Journal* IV (1976), pp. 149–65.

17. See Murray and Qin, *Origins of the Tiandi Hui* (1994), pp. 262–3, note 51. An imaginative attribution to the activities of Ma Chaozhu has been proposed by Barends J. ter Haar. See Ownby, *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies*, p. 204, note 11.

18. Hok-lam Chan, 'The White Lotus-Maitreya Doctrine and Popular Uprisings in Ming and Ch'ing China', *Sinologica* X:2 (1966), p. 220.

leaders at this time. Secret societies which staged major rebellions, such as the Taiping Rebellion of the mid-nineteenth century, although a pseudo-Christian deity was substituted for a Buddhist one — as well as minor ones, exhibited these features.

Ruan Yuan left Huai'an on 21 August 1814. He stopped in Yangzhou where he visited the ancestral graves, then travelled by land to Wuhu (蕪湖), Anhui, where he boarded a boat up the Yangzi to Jiujiang (九江). He arrived at Nanchang in the middle of September.¹⁹

While Ruan Yuan was in Jiangxi, officials under him discovered several groups of brotherhood organized for criminal activities. Unsavoury elements in the countryside had made use of the prevalent pattern of secret societies to extort money from ignorant villagers or to commit robberies on a major scale. A number of the groups claimed affiliation with the Heaven and Earth Society. This affiliation gave added importance to the cases because of the even then common knowledge that the Heaven and Earth Society was an anti-Manchu, therefore anti-dynastic organization. Ruan Yuan had known its bandit activities in support of the coastal pirates when he was in Zhejiang.²⁰ In Jiangxi, these groups continued to create disturbances to law and order. Ruan Yuan expended much of his time and energy dealing with them during his tenure here.

After 1813 there was renewed pressure from the Qing court on officials in the provinces to take action against the secret societies. The catalyst was a short-lived rebellion staged by the heterodox sect of the Eight Trigrammes (Bagua Jiao 八卦教).²¹ Their activities, including an attempted seizure of the Forbidden City in Beijing, further hardened the stance of the court against secret societies. Although this rebellion lasted only a few months, the fact that such a dangerous group could develop unhampered in the vicinity of the capital, and that it could manage to penetrate the Imperial Palace grounds itself, reinforced the court's position that all secret societies were seditious, no matter how innocuous they appeared to be on the surface. In addition, that year Chengde (成德), an Imperial Household cook who had made an attempt to assassinate Jiaqing a decade earlier, was found to be a follower of the Eight Trigrammes leader Lin Qing (林清).²² As

19. *Diziji* 4:13.

20. GZD-JQ001504. Ownby found that the Society reached eastern Jiangxi 'because the suppression of Lin Shuangwen and the Qing search for society origins forced the Tiandihui to abandon its original core areas in Taiwan, southern Fujian, and northern Guangdong'. See also Ownby, *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies* (1996), p. 127.

21. For a scholarly study of this rebellion in English, based on extensive archival research, see Susan Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China* (1976).

22. Xiao, *Qingdai Tongshi* II, p. 350.

Table 5.1 Secret Societies in Jiangxi investigated by Ruan Yuan, 1814–6²³

Date	Leader	Name of Society	Area of Operation
10/1814	Zhu Maoli 朱毛哩	None - claim to be Ming pretender and Buddha incarnate	Yugan 餘幹
11/1814	Zhong Tigang 鍾體剛	Tiandihui 添弟會 (Adding Brothers Society) honouring Ma Chaozhu of White Lotus Sect	Chongyi 崇義
12/1814	Zhong Jinlong 鍾錦龍	Sandianhui 三點會 (Three Dots Society) honouring the monk Wan Tixi, legendary founder of Tiandihui (Heaven and Earth Society)	Ganzhou 贛州
2/1815	Zeng Wencai 曾文彩	Qigaihui 乞丐會 (Beggars Society)	Jinxian 進賢
5/1815	Lu Taiwen 盧太文	Qigaihui (Also known as Bianqianhui 邊錢會 [Side of a Coin Society])	Dongxiang 東鄉
8/1815	Jiang Xuanbi 蔣宣鉅	Zhaifei 齋匪 ('Vegetarian Bandits')	Jinxian-Yugan area
3/1816	Li Laowu 李老五	Tiandihui (Heaven and Earth Society) 天地會	Luxi 廬溪

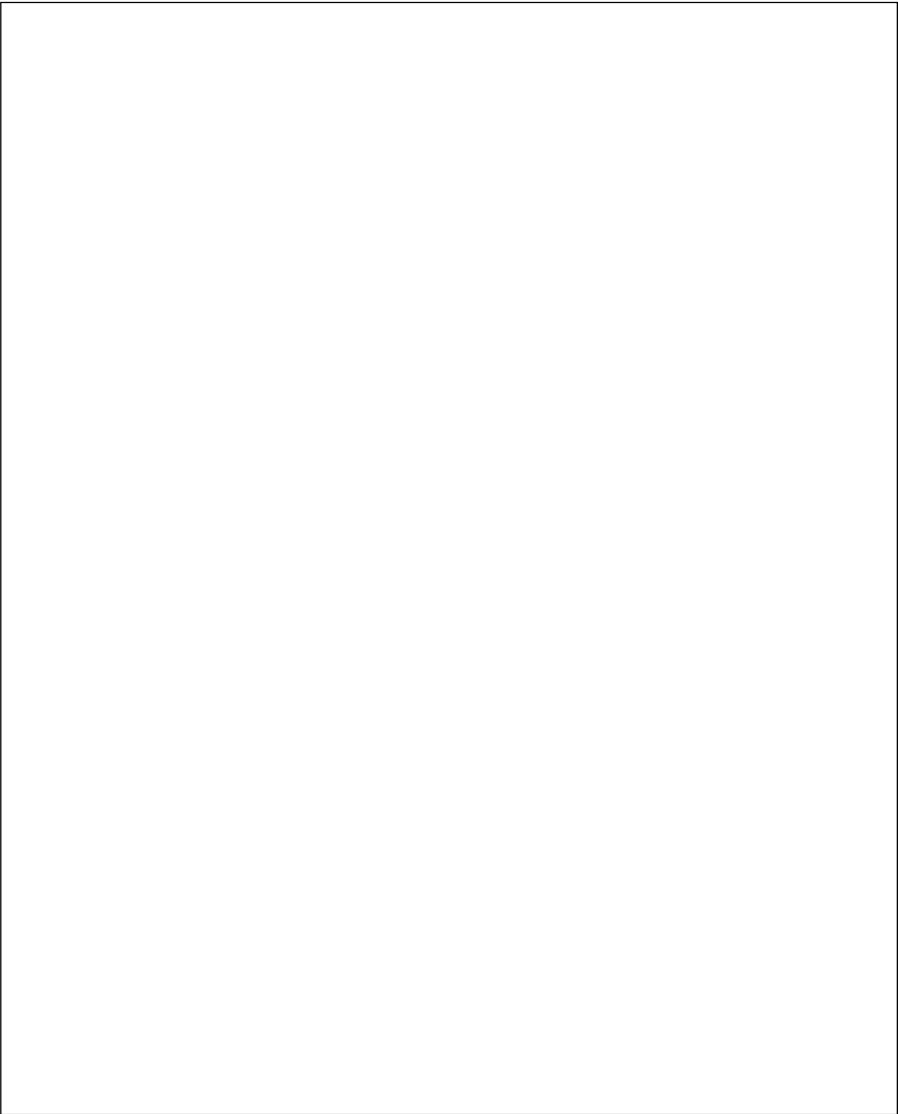
a result, the emperor was more than ever determined to treat all secret societies as personal threats to himself and as real dangers to the dynasty.

The emperor prodded his provincial officials against making light or ignoring the existence of any such groups. 'For several years the Lin Qing followers had been plotting their revolt. Had the Governor-General of Zhili and the prefect of Shuntian been a little more alert in uncovering the conspiracy earlier, it would have been an easy matter to prevent this uprising from taking place,'²⁴ wrote the emperor to Ruan Yuan in 1814. It has been maintained traditionally also, that the officials had been aware of the plot to attack Beijing since the previous spring, but had considered the source, a drifter apprehended in Taiwan, 'a spreader of incomprehensible incantations to mislead the populace',²⁵ so unreliable that they did not even bother to make any preparation against the possibility of such an uprising. In any case, seditious or merely criminal, the activities of the secret societies remained outside the law.

23. Compiled from documents cited in this chapter.

24. *Qing Shilu*, JQ 298:12b.

25. *Qingchao Yeshi Daguan* (清朝野史大觀), compiled by Xiaoheng Xiangshi Zhuren (小橫香室主人) (1936 edition), p. 144.



Map 5.1 Jiangxi circa 1815

It should be recalled here that Ruan Yuan had suffered at first-hand the humiliating experience and tremendous hardship after being dismissed from the governorship of Zhejiang in 1809 when he offended the Jiaqing Emperor over the case of Liu Fenggao. He had lost the position and prestige he had enjoyed as a second-rank official, together with the lucrative *yanglian* and 'extra income' that went with provincial positions. He must have been aware of the real reason for the suicide in 1802 of Jiqing (吉慶), who was his predecessor as Governor of Zhejiang. As Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi, Jiqing had failed to suppress an armed resistance in Guangdong, staged by five hundred members of the Heaven and Earth Society against one thousand government troops. Jiqing took his own life after receiving a strongly worded reprimand from the Jiaqing Emperor.²⁶ Ruan Yuan had succeeded in being reinstated to a provincial post after a period of disgrace in Beijing and a brief tenure as Director-General of Grain Transport. He was not about to incur the imperial wrath again.

Since the death of Zhu Gui in 1809, Ruan Yuan had no intermediary at court and had to depend completely on the good will of the Jiaqing Emperor. Even then, their relationship had not been so cordial as before. Appointing him to Jiangxi, the emperor had refused Ruan Yuan's request for a personal audience. 'There is no need for you to go through the formality of an audience,'²⁷ the emperor had written curtly. He had also stopped addressing Ruan Yuan in the honorary second person-pronoun of *qing* (卿). Instead, imperial edicts were directed to Ruan Yuan through the Grand Councillors. To preserve this rather delicate relationship, Ruan Yuan had to read the emperor's thinking very carefully. Understanding fully the emperor's state of mind, and still more fully aware of the likely consequences of failure to carry out imperial directives to the letter, Ruan Yuan duly reported the discovery of all gatherings with any suspicion of heterodoxy and sedition to the emperor. As soon as he arrived at Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi, Ruan Yuan activated the *baojia*.²⁸

The Zhu Maoli Case

The best known case Ruan Yuan handled on secret societies in Jiangxi was a simple instance of criminal extortion which should not have received the notoriety it did at all. History, however, has recorded it as a potential rebellion of some magnitude that was averted because of Ruan Yuan's vigilant application of the

26. Zhuang Jifa, 'Jiaqing nianjian de Tiandihui', p. 18.

27. Ruan Yuan Liezhuan Gao (阮元列傳稿) [Draft biography of Ruan Yuan], Qing Historiography Office.

28. *Diziji* 4:13b.

baojia. It was a case involving a leader surnamed Zhu (朱). The possibility always existed that this was another soldier of fortune trying to ride the wave of religious fervour generated by the White Lotus and Eight Trigrammes successes to stage another uprising. The surname of the leader certainly added an anti-Manchu overtone to the matter. In any case, the emperor received reports of the existence of the group as a disclosure of major significance. Ruan Yuan was awarded the honorary title of Junior Guardian of the Heir Apparent (*taizi shaobao* 太子少保) and the prestigious feathered collar.²⁹ Officials of six neighbouring provinces were alerted to be on the lookout for possible expansion of the rebellion.

Despite subsequent findings that the proclamation of a peasant, Zhu Maoli, as a descendant of the Ming imperial house and as an incarnation of a Buddha Divine, was nothing more than a confidence scam to extort money from a gullible public, the case continued to be treated by historians as a rebellion staged by a heterodox religious sect that was aborted only by official vigilance. The twentieth-century historian Xiao Yishan recorded Zhu as a rebel who had assumed the imperial reign title of the 'Late Ming' dynasty in 1813. Zhu was said to have raised arms in the counties of Fenxian, Jinxian, and Chongyi, scattered throughout Jiangxi, with headquarters at a site with a certain religious association called 'Place to Amass Goodness and Virtue' (Jishan chanlin 積善禪林) in the County of Yugan. The Governor of Jiangxi, Ruan Yuan, was said to have sent troops to suppress the revolt, capturing Zhu's lieutenants Hu Bingyao and Zhong Tigang, but not the principal instigator Zhu Maoli.³⁰ The *Veritable Records*, in a less exuberant vein, chronicled that Zhu had begun a major anti-Qing movement but had been stopped by officials under Ruan Yuan's direction before the plotters could manage to stage an actual rebellion.³¹

Ruan Yuan's own accounts, revealing the instigators as the confidence tricksters they were, were buried in *Diziji*, with the *juan* on his sojourn in Jiangxi completed before his death.³² Therefore, a conjecture can be made that Ruan

29. GZD-JQ016669 (JQ19/10/23 [1814/12/4]), memorial from Ruan Yuan, thanking the emperor for the honorific title and a jade container to hold the peacock feathers of the collar, as well as two large and four small embroidered purses.

30. Xiao, *Qingdai Tongshi* III, pp. 1–2.

31. *Qing Shilu*, JQ 298:11b–14.

32. The *juan* on Ruan Yuan's sojourn in Jiangxi was compiled by Ruan Changsheng, who died in 1833. After Ruan Yuan's retirement in 1838 until his death in 1849, Ruan Yuan, who had a sense of history, spent much of his time sorting his papers with a view for their preservation. These papers were kept in his home in Yangzhou. There were two disastrous fires, in 1845 and 1935, which destroyed his library and papers, but family members and neighbours reported that some papers were taken elsewhere in the 1960s during the Cultural Revolution. The informal letters he wrote to members of his family, for instance, have turned up in the Rare Book Collection of the Beijing Library.

Yuan had a hand in choosing the materials to be included in this work as well as on deciding how they were going to be presented. With the opening of the Qing archives to researchers, original documents of the case, including detailed information of the investigations on the county and provincial levels, showed that Ruan Yuan had reported information he had ascertained to the emperor. However, neither decision makers nor record keepers appeared to have taken note of the discrepancy between what they were told and how they wished to record as facts.

Application of the Baojia

Ruan Yuan had found the *baojia* a satisfactory measure of local control when applied to the campaign against the coastal pirates in Zhejiang earlier. Apparently, the system had not enjoyed universal success. After the Eight Trigrammes uprising in 1813, the emperor once again reiterated to provincial officials the importance of the *baojia*.³³ Shortly after Ruan Yuan arrived in Jiangxi, an Eight Trigrammes insignia was found hoisted by the side of the examination hall in Nanchang.³⁴ Immediately, he exhorted the magistrates to oversee to the *baojia* registrations personally instead of entrusting the task to the clerks. As a result of these routine registration inquiries, the Magistrate of Jinxian reported the arrest of a suspicious character named Qiu Tianze (邱天澤).³⁵ Further interrogations revealed that Qiu, a native of Yugan near the southern shore of Lake Poyang, had received a 'certificate of investiture' (*longwen pingpiao* 龍文憑票), a piece of paper with a drawing of a dragon on one side to indicate association with the emperor, from a certain Zhu Maoli. This 'certificate' showed Zhu to be 'emperor' and Qiu a 'prince of the 4th rank'. Zhu was reported to be a man in his twenties, a son of a blind fortune-teller from a village in Yugan County.

Following Qiu's confessions to the charges of sedition, a number of men involved in the issuance and sale of these 'certificates' were arrested in northern Jiangxi. Propaganda literature in the form of poetic incantations was found on them. Ruan Yuan did not record the wording of these incantations but referred to them as 'illegal language'.³⁶ Also found was a wooden 'seal of office' that entitled the holder to issue more 'certificates'. Actually the only charge that should be levied against Zhu Maoli at this time was that he had lent his name to the

33. *Huidian Tu Shili* (欽定大清會典圖事例) (1888), 626:22b.

34. *Diziji* 5:5a-b.

35. Memorial from Ruan Yuan dated JQ19/9/11 (1814/10/23), reprinted in *Diziji* 4:13b.

36. *Diziji* 4:13b.

issuance of ‘certificates’ as a part of an extortion scam. Given the fear of secret societies in official circles at that time, however, and Zhu’s claim to be a Ming descendant and a deity incarnate, a ploy that fitted into the general pattern of rebellions staged by secret societies, his existence could not be ignored by the authorities, despite the fact that as a rebellion there was a conspicuous absence of weapons of any sort. The emperor and the court could have arrived at the conclusion that this was nothing more than a confidence scam, but as it involved a secret society, they chose to treat this case as the start of a rebellion. The weapons that had to be there must have been concealed somewhere. Special efforts were to be made to uncover the weapons as well as other conspirators, including the leader Zhu Maoli, who, although said by Qiu to have gone to Pucheng in neighbouring Fujian, could in fact be hiding in any of the other provinces bordering Jiangxi. Hence, imperial edicts were sent to officials in Hunan, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong as well as Jiangxi to keep an eye on Zhu Maoli and the activities he might be conducting against the emperor and the dynasty.³⁷

Origin and Progress of the Scam

Reports from the provinces throughout 1814 and 1815 claimed various sightings of Zhu, or at least persons resembling him, but he was not found. Exhaustive investigations were carried by Li Jiayen (李佳言) in Pucheng ‘day and night without ceasing’,³⁸ but with no visible result. Ruan Yuan’s continuous search in Jiangxi located forty-six persons and again nineteen more connected with this scam, but Zhu was not among them.³⁹ From their confessions it could be pieced together that the scam originated when one Hu Bingyao (胡秉耀) bought a second-hand book from a junk dealer at a street bazaar in September 1813. Hu, cited by Xiao Yishan as a leader of this conspiracy, was from the same village as Zhu Maoli. He was also known as Hu Yuanhui (圓輝), a fact that confused certain historians, including Xiao Yishan, who gave his name at one place as Hu Binghui (輝).⁴⁰ Hu made a living by predicting the future from analysis of words. By dividing a selected word into radicals, this type of fortune-telling, analysis of words (*cezi* 測字), was to supply the answer sought by the person who wanted to know

37. *Shichao Shengxun*, JQ 101:25b–26b.

38. *Xuzhuan Yangzhou fuzhi* (續纂揚州府志) (1874), compiled by Yingxie (英傑), 9:24b–25.

39. GZD-JQ 018048 (JQ 20/3/8 [1815/4/17]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

40. Xiao, *Qingdai Tongshi* II, p. 349. In a later chapter Xiao cited Hu’s name correctly. Xiao wrote that the *Tonghua Lu* had originally given the wrong character for Hu’s name. *Qingdai Tongshi*, III, pp. 1–2.

the prognosis of a particular event in advance.⁴¹ To practice this trade, one must know how to read and write, possess a quick wit, an imagination, some understanding of psychology, and definitely a sense of larceny at heart.⁴² Apparently Hu Bingyao could lay claim to all these attributes, and had the ability to compose jingles as well. Thus, he could fill the role of a typical secret society organizer who was literate but whose achievements had fallen short of the acceptable standards of success at that time.⁴³

On 7 September 1813, a few days after the purchase of the book which had contained a plan and a map for a military campaign as well as certain inflammatory writings, Hu brought it with him when he visited Qiu Tianzhe at the latter's residence at the Place to Amass Goodness and Virtue. Qiu and his other guests read the book with fascination. Meanwhile, Hu boasted that he could interpret the map and the writings, and, if the right person could be found to pose as successor to the Ming imperial mantle, a fortune could be made from selling 'certificates of investiture' to unsuspecting and ignorant villagers. One of the men present, a Yang Yilong (楊易龍) (cited in the draft biographies of Ruan Yuan and the *Veritable Records* as Yang Yi, 楊易),⁴⁴ suggested that Zhu Maoli, who had the appropriate surname as well as a certain amount of charisma, could serve as titular head to such a scam. Zhu was located and persuaded to proclaim himself a descendant of the Ming imperial house. Later investigations showed him to be descended from a Zhu Mishao (朱彌邵), who had settled in the Yügan County during the Song dynasty.⁴⁵ Throughout the Yuan and Ming times, the family had engaged in farming. Never before had any member claimed descent from the Ming imperial house of Zhu Yuanzhang (朱元璋). Therefore, Zhu Maoli's claim as well as the entire stratagem were created out of thin air by Hu Bingyao to extort money, aided and abetted by Yang and their cohorts.

41. Example given by Zhao Yi (趙翼 1727–1814): A man went to a fortune-teller to ask for the prognosis of his father's illness. The word he drew was the character *yi* (一 one). The fortune-teller predicted that the father would not recover as this character marked the last stroke in the character *sheng* (生 life) and the first stroke in the character *si* (死 death). Therefore, the father had reached the last phase of life and the first phase of death. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Chinese Language*, compiled by the Institute of Advanced Chinese Studies (Taipei, 1976), #8361.

42. Such personal traits were seen by Frederic Wakeman from a different perspective: 'One dangerous sign was the presence of a soothsayer who could "excite and delude the minds of the people" ...'; 'Rebellion and Revolution', *JAS* 36:2 (1977), p. 206.

43. Hok-lam Chan, 'The White Lotus', p. 220.

44. *Qing Shilu* JQ298:11b. This omission may have been deliberate. Whereas the full name of Yang was given in Ruan Yuan's memorials the character long was omitted in the draft biography of the Qing Historiography Office. Beatrice Bartlett offers the theory that the character long, meaning dragon, was omitted to avoid giving the criminal an auspicious character with imperial implications.

45. *Diziji* 4:17.

Two days later, on 9 September 1813, after making certain preparations and recruiting several more men, the group met again at the Place to Amass Goodness and Virtue. There were then eight men: Zhu, Hu, Yang, Qiu, Lu Shenghui (盧勝輝), and three new recruits, including a Buddhist monk, Tiaoming (滌明) (original name Peng Dingguo 彭定國 or Peng Zhongcai 彭中彩). The inclusion of a monk was essential because in order to attract popular following the schemers had to exploit the religious superstitions of the populace, and a monk represented a religious symbol of support for Zhu as a deity incarnate. An altar of some sort was installed to provide a further aura of auspiciousness. Under this altar, the men pledged their loyalty to Zhu by kneeling in front of him, calling him ‘Emperor of the Late Ming Dynasty’ and referring themselves as ‘subject officials’ (*chen* 臣). Not content with this claim to the Mandate of Heaven alone, Zhu was given the even more grandiloquent title of ‘Future Buddha Incarnate on Earth to Save the World’. This gesture was in keeping with the prevalent practice of the heterodox religious sects which assigned to their leaders the role of ‘incarnate gods ... (with thrust) always toward emergent deities, toward more immediate and direct contact with divine powers’.⁴⁶

The conspirators were then ‘invested’ with ‘ranks’ and ‘titles’ which were duly inscribed on sheets of yellow paper with dragon designs, imprinted with seals carved by a seal-maker Wang Liangkui (王良魁). Later on, when Ruan Yuan, a noted authority on orthography, saw the seals, he remarked that ‘the characters could not really be acceptable as seal script’,⁴⁷ implying that the conspirators could not be considered educated men. The seal-maker’s skill also proved to be disappointing to Zhu, who had wanted a seal with a nine-headed lion, but found this animal to be beyond the ability of the seal-maker to produce.

Equipped with these impressively sealed ‘certificates’, the conspirators went out to sell them at one to two hundred copper cash each.⁴⁸ Individual purchasers appeared to be more impressed by Zhu’s religious than by his imperial claims. A survey of persons who bought the ‘certificates’ revealed a majority to be illiterate but semi-skilled workmen with a little spare cash, ignorant and gullible, like people who readily indulge in any form of gambling. They lived in the neighbourhood of Yugan and Jinxian, but there were indications that the scam had been brought into the north-western corner of Fujian where they had relatives.

46. Daniel L. Overmyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion, Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China* (1976), p. 166.

47. *Diziji* 4:14.

48. GZD-JQ017846 (JQ20/2/14 [1815/3/24]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

With this elaborate beginning, it almost seems anti-climatic to have the end come so quickly when Qiu was discovered in a routine *baojia* registration process. Altogether, including all victims, about seventy men were involved. The Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang, Wang Zhiyi (汪志伊 1743–1818), an old colleague of Ruan Yuan from pirate fighting days, cooperated by arresting persons involved in the Zhu Maoli case in Fujian and extraditing them to Jiangxi for further interrogation and sentencing.⁴⁹ Whatever misgivings Ruan Yuan might have entertained personally, for political expediency, he treated this case as an anti-Qing rebellion that had spread beyond the confines of one province, rather than as a simple confidence racket to extort small amounts of money from an ignorant and gullible populace. Nevertheless, he was careful in his examination of suspects and cleared the innocent when evidence showed them to have had nothing to do with the duplicity. Four persons named by Qiu Tianzhe in his original confessions were freed when they were found to be completely innocent of the charges against them. The man at whose house the wooden block for printing the ‘certificates’ was found, was adjudged innocent because he was storing a package containing the block as a favour to his cousin, without knowing the content.⁵⁰

The guilty were punished under the law against the organizers of secret societies. Hu, Yang, Lu, and Qiu, the original instigators of the plot, were sentenced to death by the slow and painful process of one thousand knife cuts. Others, including the monk Tiaoming, who had received ‘titles’ and ‘ranks’ as well as money from the sale of the ‘certificates’, were sentenced to public beheading. All their properties were confiscated. Individuals who bought the ‘certificates’ were sentenced to canning and exile. The house at the Place to Amass Goodness and Virtue, the original scene of the crime, was burned to the ground.⁵¹ After review by the Board of Punishments, the original sentences were altered.⁵² Seventeen of the accused were adjudged to have been actively involved in the plot and were executed. Thirty-five men, who were proved to be definitely victims of the scam, were sent into exile and slavery, so that other potential victims would be forewarned to be more cautious in following leaders of this genre. Of the second group of nineteen arrested, punishment along similar lines was meted out by the Board.⁵³ On the whole, Ruan Yuan’s original sentences were more lenient.

49. GZD-JQ018048.

50. GZD-JQ018604, memorial from Ruan Yuan. Enclosure No. 2 (JQ20/3/24 [1815/5/3]).

51. *Diziji* 4:17b; GZD-JQ017846, 018048.

52. GZD-JQ017846. Vermillion endorsement.

53. *Qing Shilu*, QL298:12b–13b.

Aftermath

Meanwhile, Zhu Maoli continued to remain at large. Ruan Yuan had to chase every rumoured sighting of this fugitive. The case first came to light in October 1814 with the arrest of Qiu Tianzhe. By July 1815, with the arrest and execution of all of its instigators, except for Zhu who was really more an instrument than the moving force behind the scam, the case should have ended. The emperor, however, still was not satisfied with the wholesale arrest and executions. His temper was growing short. When he received various reports of the sightings of Zhu, including one from Bailing (百齡 1748–1816), Governor-General of Liang Jiang, that there was an anonymous poster in Raozhou (饒州) giving dates and locations where Zhu was supposed to have been sighted, the Jiaqing Emperor ranked at the Grand Councillor in anger,

Why have I not heard from Ruan Yuan? Ruan Yuan should pay more attention to important events taking place in his jurisdiction. If he had been paying attention to his job, why had he behaved like a wooden dummy, and had neither seen nor heard anything about a person named Zhu Songmi who had been sheltering Zhu Maoli?⁵⁴

Ruan Yuan wrote back to the emperor that he had been working very hard on the case personally, trying to trace Zhu Maoli, testing residents by sending plain clothed agents pretending to seek shelter at various localities. The detectives had found the residents extremely law-abiding, for they turned away any stranger who spoke with a non-local accent or who had dubious identifications.⁵⁵ He further offered rewards for information on Zhu. A description of Zhu as a man with round eyes, a pointed face and wavy hair, was circulated widely. The price on his head was set at five thousand taels.

Ruan Yuan went on to track down the source of the rumour that Zhu Maoli had been sighted. The Prefect of Raozhou had just found the graves of the grandparents and the parents of Zhu Maoli, wrote Ruan Yuan to the emperor, and, in the process of destroying these graves, had given rise to fresh rumours on the whereabouts of Zhu Maoli.⁵⁶ The anonymous wall poster had accused someone named Zhu Songmi (朱宋米) to be hiding Zhu Maoli, renewing speculations that the latter was still in the Jinxian area. The poster also claimed that the writer had seen Zhu Maoli in the company of Huang Yusong (黃玉松) and Zhou Maohua (周茂華). Ruan Yuan's investigations cleared all three men.

54. Court letter to Ruan Yuan sent by express post of five hundred *li* a day, as cited in GZD-JQ019008 (JQ20/6/20 [1815/7/26]), memorial from Ruan Yuan, Governor of Jiangxi.

55. GZD-JQ018604. Enclosure No. 2.

56. GZD-JQ018604. Enclosure No. 2.

Huang was out of town in Hubei on business at the time he was said to have been with Zhu Maoli. Zhou's son was a local official of upright standing. The father was a man above reproach. Furthermore, there was no such address as the one given in the poster. Zhu Songmi turned out to be really a Zhu Qiaoshan (朱喬山), a first-degree holder from a wealthy gentry family. His replies to official questions and his straightforward demeanour had established his innocence beyond doubt. Further inquiries into the origin of the poster revealed the writer to be a certain Dong Weihuang (董維黃) who had a disagreement with the men he accused and had borne grudges against them. Ruan Yuan, 'unable to sleep from shame'⁵⁷ because of his failure to apprehend Zhu and to prevent such problems from disturbing the peace of mind of the emperor, promised to increase his vigilance against illegal activities, criminal as well as seditious, of all secret societies.

Since the uprisings of the White Lotus and Eight Trigrams sects, the secret societies represented a clear and present danger to the Qing rulers. The case of Zhu Maoli serves to illustrate the tension under which the Jiaqing Emperor operated at that time. The emperor's patience with officials who could not follow his thinking on the potential dangers presented by the underground organization of the societies was also wearing thin. Provincial officials had to fall in line if they wished to avoid the consequences of the emperor's outbursts of temper. The Zhu Maoli case, clearly a simple criminal racket concocted by unsavoury characters to extort money from the ignorant and gullible, was viewed as an act of rebellion and heterodoxy by the emperor and the court. There were so many secret societies riding on the wave of popular superstitions and discontent to engage in anti-government activities, that the emperor became suspicious that 'their association with rackets and banditry might lead to rebellion'⁵⁸ in all cases. Ruan Yuan's reports to the emperor, meanwhile, should serve to help modern historians understand the methods adopted by Qing officials for local control.

Heaven and Earth Society Connections in Jiangxi and Guangxi

During the mid-Qing, organizations involving more than twenty men with different surnames were illegal.⁵⁹ Members of organizations known to be seditious, such as the Heaven and Earth Society, were especially subject to heavy penalties. 'Fully aware of the severe punishments for members of the Heaven and Earth

57. GZD-JQ 018604. Enclosure No. 2.

58. Jones and Kuhn, *CHOC* 10:1, p. 134.

59. GZD-JQ017521 (JQ20/1/17 [1815/2/25]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

Society',⁶⁰ wrote Ruan Yuan, then Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi, in 1821 to the new emperor, 'organizers of secret societies called their groups by different names, such as the Society for Old People (*Laoren hui* 老人會) hoping to disguise their activities and to keep them from official surveillance'.⁶¹

In this 1821 memorial to Daoguang, Ruan Yuan used the characters 天 (*tian* Heaven) and 地 (*di* Earth) in reference to the society, as he did in the *Diziji*.⁶² During the Jiaqing reign, however, he had used interchangeably the characters for 'heaven and earth' with those for 'adding brothers' (*tiandi* 添弟) when he referred to the society.⁶³ Whereas Daoguang had preferred calling the spade a spade, Jiaqing, or the men around him, seemed to have wished to avoid the offensive characters 'heaven and earth'. There is no doubt that both sets of characters referred to the same organization, the Tiandihui. Daoguang probably was less paranoid about secret societies; perhaps his other concerns in Guangdong were more urgent. Ruan Yuan took the secret society activities in Guangdong and Guangxi more seriously than he did while he was in Jiangxi, even though the size of the individual groups was not any larger.⁶⁴ Even then, he continued to emphasize the non-political and criminal nature of the Heaven and Earth Society, to the displeasure of the emperor.

Zhong Tigang

One case in Jiangxi that directly involved the Heaven and Earth Society of Guangdong and Guangxi was the one in Congyi instigated by a Zhong Tigang.⁶⁵ This was the same man attributed by Xiao Yishan to have been a part of the Zhu Maoli movement.⁶⁶ Consequently, Western historians who based their research solely on published Chinese works, such as Xiao's, stressed the seditious nature of secret societies in Jiangxi during the Jiaqing reign and concluded that their Jiangxi activities was a bridge between the anti-Manchu movement of South China and those of Central and North China. Their conclusions were correct, but these conclusions were based on information of a later period that exaggerated the importance of these local brotherhoods during the decade or so immediately

60. GZD-DG000013 (DG1/2/2 [1821/3/5]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

61. GZD-DG000013.

62. *Diziji* 5:1.

63. For instance, in GZD-JQ017818, he used the characters 'adding brothers'. In GZD-JQ017069, however, the characters for 'heaven and earth' were used.

64. GZD-DG000013.

65. GZD-JQ017818; *Diziji* 5:1–6.

66. Xiao, *Qingdai Tongshi* II, p. 134.

following the White Lotus and Eight Trigrammes uprisings. Their attitude was similar to that adopted by the emperor and the court at that time, reflecting their dependence on the *Veritable Records*, which remains an important source today but their timing was sometimes confused.

The archival documents revealed that Zhong Tigang had nothing whatsoever to do with the Zhu Maoli case. His activities had been confined to a county in south-western Jiangxi, an area bordering Guangdong and Hunan. Zhu's area of operations was more extensive, as people involved in his scam had spread throughout several counties near the Poyang Lake in northern Jiangxi, and had actually entered Fujian. Had Zhu Maoli been a part of Zhong's organization, as suggested by historians who based their findings on Xiao Yishan's, the geographical expanse alone would have given his scam major rebellion status more credulity. As this was not the case, the historical importance assigned to the case was less than deserved.

When the case of Zhong Tigang involving the Heaven and Earth Society first came to light, Ruan Yuan had already uncovered two unusual aspects about this group. The Zhong group had chosen Ma Chaozu (馬朝祖) as its patron master instead of Wan Tixi (萬提喜), traditionally accepted as the founder of the Heaven and Earth Society.⁶⁷ Ma was a minor White Lotus Sect leader who was found guilty of sedition in Hubei in 1752.⁶⁸ Ruan Yuan thought that since Ma was already forty at the time of his sentence, it was doubtful that he would still be behind the current group sixty years later.⁶⁹ The Zhong group's secret language was also different. The usual secret language for the Heaven and Earth Society members was 'when raising one's hands, one does not depart from the three [dots]; when opening one's mouth, one does not forget one's origins',

67. Xiao, *Qingdai Tongshi* II, p. 134. There were several versions of the founding of the Heaven and Earth Society. The most popular was that the surname Wan (萬, meaning ten thousand) adopted for the founder of the society was an allusion to Zheng Chenggong, the end-of-the-Ming dynasty official who led ten thousand followers against the Qing. According to confessions by a Yan Yan, follower of Lin Shuangwen, the society was originally founded by forty-eight monks who had mastered all kinds of martial arts skills through incantations and spells. Later, after most of the original forty-eight monks had died, the thirteen remaining organized the Heaven and Earth Society in four provinces. Wan's area of operations was Guangdong. Tradition also gives Wan's surname as Hong (洪). As he was supposed to be the second son in his family, he was also known as Number Two Hong (Hong Er 洪二). The rest of his name, Heshang (和尚 monk), was the title by which he was known. *Qing Shilu*, *Qianlong* 1319:32. See also Dai Xuanchi, 'Tiandihui Mingcheng' (天地會名稱), p. 157; Zhuang Jifa, 'Qingdai Tiandihui Yuanliu Kao' (天地會源流考), p. 264, Murray and Qin, *Origins of the Tiandihui* (1994), pp. 16–20 and throughout the book.

68. GZD-JQ017069.

69. GZD-JQ017069.

nonsensical babbling with a multitude of hidden meanings that were only clear to the initiated. The secret language for Zhong's group was 'regardless of soldiers or policemen, we resist in unity', representing a direct challenge to law enforcement authorities.⁷⁰

Ruan Yuan, although noticing these departures from traditional practices, was either unwilling or failed to recognize the significance of the coming together of these two anti-dynastic forces in one single organization. He had been convinced that this choice was made at random as Ma's name had appeared in the martial arts training manual the group had been perusing.⁷¹ He did realize, however, that this was an important case. He sent Judicial Commissioner Hengmin (恒敏 d. 1832) to Congyi to bring back the prisoners to Nanchang where he interrogated the leaders himself.⁷² From initial reports, he had expected to find a secret society modelled on the Heaven and Earth Society, since Zhong had claimed to be inspired by this secret society of Guangdong. What he had not expected was that Zhong had introduced practices of the White Lotus as well.

Origin and Progress of the Scam

Zhong Tigang's forebears had moved to Jiangxi from Guangdong where he still had relatives. In 1814, he was a resident of the County of Congyi in southern Jiangxi, but Ruan Yuan did not say how he earned his living. In any case, Zhong appeared to have had a great deal of spare time to spend with his friends. On 11 September 1814, he and four friends, Qiu Fengmin, Cai Longzu, Yi Xiufa, and Xie Luoli, were chatting idly in a store owned by Xie. Zhong told the stories he had heard from his Guangdong relatives how brotherhood were being organized so that members could help each other in various endeavours. The brotherhood could also serve the purpose of 'taking advantage of ignorant villagers'⁷³ in scams.

Agreeing that this proposition was certainly tempting, Xie then produced a manual on how to box — using spells and incantations. This manual boasted of martial arts training in developing physical endurance so that a person's body could withstand injury by remaining 'immobile when attacked by a thousand

70. GZD-JQ017069.

71. GZD-JQ017818.

72. Confession of Zhong Tigang as quoted in GZD-JQ017818. The memorial reporting the discovery of the Zhong case, GZD-JQ017069, contains some preliminary information Ruan Yuan had on hand, but certain facts were revised by information obtained during the interrogations. See also *Diziji* 5:1–6.

73. GZD-JQ017818.

fists, and impenetrable when hit by ten thousand hands'.⁷⁴ In addition, the spells and incantations were to call on the materialization of 'heaven and earth, officers and soldiers of forces of the light and the dark, as well as those of thunder'.⁷⁵ If these claims sounded too fantastic even for ignorant peasants to swallow, it must be recalled here that their latter-day manifestations, the Boxers of 'The Righteous and Harmonious Fists', managed to convince policy-makers of the Qing government with similar claims, enabling them to play an important role in the last years of the nineteenth century.

In addition to claims by Zhong to Heaven and Earth Society connections, what made this group interesting was their selection of Ma Chaozhu as their patron-master. Earlier memorials had reported the group to have adopted the generally accepted founder of the Heaven and Earth Society as their patron master, but this had proved to be only a rumour from confessions of the leaders.⁷⁶ In any case, the five instigators gathered on 13 September 1814, at a deserted Daoist shrine in a village in Congyi for the initiation ceremonies of their society. An oath was taken providing that 'all members of the society would henceforth come to the aid of each other, especially when facing arrest by the authorities'.⁷⁷ This society had two other subsequent meetings, on 13 October and 26 November 1814, as more recruits were initiated, but the oath was not repeated at these subsequent meetings. This oath alone would have established the group as entertaining intentions to engage in illegal activities since members were pledging for the eventuality of being arrested.

Within the next month, thirty-six new members were recruited and initiated into the society.⁷⁸ In another six weeks, sixteen more were initiated.⁷⁹ For the first initiation ceremony, there was no mention of anyone being selected as leader of the group. Nor was there any money involved. For the next two ceremonies, Zhong was named their leader. Each initiate contributed one to two hundred copper cash to buy the chicken and wine used at the ceremonies.

74. GZD-JQ017818. With a vermilion brush, the Jiaqing Emperor had crossed off these words and had written in the margin of the memorial: 'This sounds like dogs barking. I cannot believe that there are actually people who believe in such nonsense.'

75. GZD-JQ017818.

76. GZD-JQ017069.

77. GZD-JQ017818.

78. GZD-JQ017818. Although Ruan Yuan gave the number of new recruits as thirty-six, he only named eleven recruited by Zhong, five by Qiu, nine by Cai, four by Yi, and two by Xie. Therefore, the numbers did not match. There was no explanation for this discrepancy. The emperor did not question the difference.

79. GZD-JQ017818. Again, Ruan Yuan gave only ten names.

Except for the original oath sworn by the instigators in forming the society, other aspects of the ceremonies remained the same. All three initiations were held at the same shrine. Each time passages on the thousand fists from the training manual were read. Then, a chicken was slaughtered; the blood mixed into the wine, and the wine was consumed by all initiates. When nobody could understand how to follow the manual's instructions, Zhong declared that he would send for someone to come from Guangdong to teach them.

It was when the officials learned that members of the society were planning a robbery that its existence was discovered. The fact that Zhong had to be extradited from Guangdong where he had sought refuge added further to the severity of the case. Zhong, who had organized a Heaven and Earth Society, selecting the name of a known rebel as patron-master, was also charged with heterodoxy for propagating spells and incantations from the training manual. He was judged guilty as a criminal, and was caned forty strokes in public, before being beheaded in accordance with precedents established in Fujian for members of the Heaven and Earth Society.⁸⁰ Qiu and Yi were beheaded without the preliminary caning. Cai had died in prison — but not from torture, insisted Ruan Yuan.⁸¹ Xie was never captured. Thirty-one others were judged guilty and sent into exile in Xinjiang 'to work in the fields or at other menial tasks'.⁸² Local officials who had permitted Zhong and Xie to escape from Jiangxi were investigated and punished.⁸³ There was no mention of *baojia* responsibilities in this case.

There is always a chance that Ruan Yuan was making light of the real involvement of the group in political activities because he did not want to be blamed by the emperor for the existence of secret societies under his jurisdiction. Still, in view of watchfulness by provincial officials on each other and by the censors, the likelihood for Ruan Yuan to make a deliberate attempt to deceive the emperor was extremely remote.

Other Cases

Archival documents show several more cases involving Ruan Yuan's handling of secret society activities in Jiangxi. Although he considered these activities more criminal than seditious, he had a hard time trying to convince the emperor to his way of thinking. These documents show the delicate position of an official.

80. GZD-JQ017818.

81. GZD-JQ017818.

82. GZD-JQ017818.

83. GZD-JQ017818.

He had to make sure that he had to give more than 100 percent of effort to do the emperor's bidding. Further, depending on the emperor's mood, sometimes even that was not enough. Here, either the emperor considered the evidence Ruan Yuan had gathered against the secret societies and heterodox sects insufficient, or he believed simply that Ruan Yuan had not been thorough in this area. In each case, including that of Zhu Maoli, there had not been any concrete proof of a massive anti-Qing movement in Jiangxi. The emperor was showing signs of growing impatience with Ruan Yuan for failing to come up with a real break-through in finding evidence that such a movement really existed under this jurisdiction.

The censor Xiong Chi (熊桴) sent a memorial to the emperor that he was noticing 'numerous activities by members of Three Dots Society and Side of the Coin Society in South Jiangxi, disturbing law and order in the Jinxian area'.⁸⁴ The Jiaqing Emperor, who by that time was no longer writing to Ruan Yuan personally, sent a court letter through the Grand Council.

Ruan Yuan must take seriously the matter of arresting violators. He must not consider any lead in these matters too slight or too troublesome to pursue. Although he had uncovered the activities of Zhu Maoli's plot at the outset ... he has yet to show any real effort in going after the leaders ...⁸⁵

This accusation made by the emperor that Ruan Yuan was not exerting enough effort, coming immediately upon the heel of an earlier edict which reminded Ruan Yuan that he held his position by the grace of the emperor, could well mean that Ruan Yuan's future was dim — if the emperor had indeed meant to put the blame on Ruan Yuan for the restiveness of the country. Ruan Yuan's promotion to the position of Governor-General of Hu-Guang and then Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi shortly thereafter bespoke the fact that the emperor's harsh words were utterances of a tired and frustrated man who was finding it increasingly difficult to cope with all the problems confronting him.

Ruan Yuan, on the other hand, could not afford to second-guess the emperor. He continued to investigate cases in internal security as well as other routine criminal matters such as murder and incest.⁸⁶ By the time he left Jiangxi in August 1816, he felt confident enough to record that 'the general conditions in Jiangxi were satisfactory. All heterodox sects had been eliminated. The people could begin to live without worry once again.'⁸⁷

84. GZD-JQ017851.

85. Court letter to Ruan Yuan as cited in GZD-JQ017851.

86. GZD-JQ018049 (JQ20/3/8 [1815/4/17]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

87. *Diziji* 5:5b.

Investigations in Guangdong and Guangxi

On 30 November 1817, Ruan Yuan arrived at Canton as Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi. His records show that once again his principal interests were coastal defence and academic pursuits. Although only once in a while pirates still staged minor raids, and foreign traders in Canton were quiet, Ruan Yuan kept up with his vigilance. He told his followers that ‘cats are kept for the purpose of catching mice. If you get rid of the cat because all the mice are gone, you can be certain that the mice will return in no time at all.’⁸⁸ He was also busy establishing mulberry tree farms in order to create a community for raising silk, and was collecting scholars to compile the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Guangdong* and to establish the Xuehaitang Academy.

Secret societies were active in the two provinces but Ruan Yuan made no mention of them in his private papers until September 1820. A censor, Jiang Yunjia (蔣雲賈), was recorded to have sent a memorial to the Jiaqing Emperor in May 1819:

The Heaven and Earth Society in Guangdong had always been a nuisance. As its activities had not been contained, they had spread beyond the borders into Hunan. Their members have committed all sorts of crimes, including larceny. A number of soldiers and policemen are protecting society members. Some are actually themselves members of the societies. Before an intended raid on society meetings could take place, members are warned off so that they can escape and resist arrest successfully. In short, arresting officers themselves are actually the ears, eyes, hands, and teeth of the secret societies.⁸⁹

Apparently this was not the only such memorials received from the censors. Another called the emperor’s attention to the existence of a Heaven and Earth Society cell in Guanyang (灌陽), Guangxi. As a result, an imperial edict was issued to Ruan Yuan.

A censor has memorialized that a group of bandits has formed a Heaven and Earth Society unit in Guanyang, and that among the thirty or so bandits captured by the magistrate were soldiers and policemen. This edict is issued to Ruan Yuan to go to Guanyang himself to survey the situation.⁹⁰

Left with no other option, Ruan Yuan departed for Guanyang. As he arrived at Guilin on 19 September 1820, the news of the Jiaqing Emperor’s death reached him.⁹¹ He continued on to Guanyang to interrogate the Society members,

88. *Diziji* 5:14.

89. *Qing Shilu*, JQ358:4b–5.

90. *Shichao Shengxun*, DG80:1.

91. *Diziji* 5:19a–b.

together with the Governor of Guangxi, Zhao Dianzheng. Unfortunately, their joint memorial on this subject has not been preserved either as a document or in printed form, so no detailed information on this group is known. Later on, however, Ruan Yuan wrote to the Daoguang Emperor that the Heaven and Earth Society group in Guanyang had been organized into different units. Each unit was formed with ten or twenty to several dozen members.⁹² Zhao had believed the Heaven and Earth Society members to be ‘vagabonds and former river pirates’⁹³ but Ruan Yuan thought them to be ‘migrants from Guangdong, Hunan, and Yunnan, joined together originally for mutual protection but eventually forming into secret societies after getting hold of old books with incantations (of the White Lotus variety)’.⁹⁴ Wealthier villagers eventually joined these societies to protect their properties from being harmed by these ‘outlawed bandits’.⁹⁵

Ruan Yuan adopted the same methods in suppressing secret society activities as he did against the pirates earlier. He reactivated the *baojia* and trained local militia. He built watch towers so that when bandit bands approached, gongs would be sounded, and militia units from nearby communities would respond. He financed these programmes in Guangdong by obtaining contributions from the official *yanglian* fund and by soliciting merchants.⁹⁶ In Guangxi, where this method of financing was not realistic because of the absence of a wealthy merchant community, he appropriated 6,000 taels from the Salt Fund of the provinces, and collected interests from lending 150,000 taels from the treasury.⁹⁷ The Daoguang Emperor complimented Ruan Yuan on his efforts.

Your introduction of the *baojia* and training of local militia have strengthened local control, but you must not treat the bandits who formed secret societies as if they were ordinary criminals.⁹⁸

The emperor had considered Ruan Yuan’s treatment of captured society members overly lenient. Ruan Yuan, on the other hand, did not want to decapitate all captured criminals when evidence did not show them to be engaging in seditious activities. He did not wish to take human life unduly.⁹⁹

92. GZD-DG000013.

93. *Qing Shilu*, DG12:16a–b.

94. GZD-DG000013.

95. GZD-DG000013.

96. *Diziji* 5:31.

97. *Diziji* 5:31.

98. *Diziji* 5:31.

99. *Diziji* 5:31.

Concluding Comments

Ruan Yuan's contributions in the area of internal security and local control to the Qing court are principally in the information he gathered from interrogations of society members sent to the emperor in his memorials and their enclosures. This information served to identify certain groups not known before. In addition, as in the case of the Heaven and Earth Society, materials gathered by Ruan Yuan substantiated what the court already knew on the mass appeal, methods of recruitment, and expansion of the operations of secret societies from South China into Central China.¹⁰⁰ Still, as in the case of coastal pirates, although he adopted Qing policies of control in accordance with established laws and principles, problems that led the populace to turn into outlawed activities in the first place were too much for any official to eliminate at that, or any other, time.

100. Reports on the organization of the local brotherhoods, initiation ceremonies, secret language and signs had been sent to the emperor by Ruan Yuan's predecessors in Jiangxi, GZD-JQ 015041. Much earlier, similar information had been sent by Jiqing (吉慶), Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi, GZD-JQ 009268 (JQ7/9/29 [1802/10/16]).

6

Management of Foreign Relations at Canton, 1817–26

Ruan Yuan was Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi from November 1817 to August 1826. As ‘trade and tribute in the Confucian view were cognate aspects of a single system of foreign relations,’¹ the governor-general at Canton was the highest Chinese authority dealing with foreigners in China on specific issues and on a day-to-day basis. In the port of Canton there were foreign traders in the foreign factories and on the foreign ships. The provincial authorities’ responsibilities therefore embraced all the foreigners within Chinese jurisdiction, except the Russians in Beijing. This assignment was important for Ruan Yuan. From the historical perspective, it also gave him international exposure, so his name has been known outside China since his time.

When Ruan Yuan arrived at Canton, there were several potentially explosive issues in Sino-British relations. The Congress of Vienna (1815) had ended the Napoleonic wars officially, so British renewed their interests in expanding trade in Asia, including China. The failure of the Amherst mission the year after had left certain issues unresolved. The fact that five British ships carrying the mission to Dagou (大沽) had managed to survey the Chinese coast from Hebei to Canton, leaving Jiaqing and the court more sensitive than ever to the issue of British naval presence in Chinese waters. Jurisdiction over foreign nationals in port was also a source of serious disagreement. The importation of opium and exportation of *sycee* silver, both prohibited by imperial decree, were to become a major area of controversy in time. Diplomacy as an art of managing foreign relations was outside the Chinese experience. As Westerners at Canton were neither tribute bearers nor alien conquerors, Ruan Yuan chose to manage his dealings with foreigners as a matter of security and control.

The Canton system governed all foreign (except Russian and tributary) trade in China, which had been confined to the port of Canton since 1760. Under this

1. John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast* (1953), p. 33.

system, foreigners were required to live and work in their quarters in Canton, known as the factories, during the trading season. They carried on their buying and selling through franchised *hong* merchants. As time went on, these *hong* merchants performed an increasing number of functions. By 1817,

they not only settled prices, sold goods, guaranteed duties, negotiated with and restrained the foreigners, controlled smuggling, and leased the factories to them, they also managed all the aspects of banking, acted as interpreting agencies, supported militia and educational institutions, and made all manners of presents and contributions to the authorities far and near.²

While leadership of the foreign merchants rested in the Select Committee of the British East India Company, each foreign firm licensed to transact business in Canton, as well as each of its ships coming into the port, had to be secured by a *hong* merchant. The *hong* merchant had to guarantee the good conduct of the officers and crew of the ship, and to assure the Chinese authorities that the ship was not carrying contraband. Under this system, the security merchant also served the important role as the intermediary between the Chinese officials and the foreign traders.

Despite accusations by the Jiaqing and Daoguang Emperors that Ruan Yuan was expending more time and energy on establishing academies and compiling books than on affairs of state, a sentiment echoed by the twentieth-century American historian John King Fairbank, both British and Chinese records show that Ruan Yuan had taken the conduct of foreign affairs at Canton very seriously.³ He adhered strictly to the protocol of the Canton system, handling negotiations with foreigners through the *hong* merchants, refusing 'to establish direct communications between the local government and the foreign community'.⁴ Although foreigners in Canton complained about Ruan Yuan's 'inflexibility'⁵ at that time, they remembered him

2. Fairbank, p. 55.

3. Jiaqing's accusations were communicated to Ruan Yuan through court letters. See, for instance, GZD-JQ019639. Similar admonition came from the Daoguang Emperor as quoted in GZD-DG 000013. Both were angry because they felt that Ruan Yuan was not exerting all his efforts in suppressing secret society activities. Fairbank was citing Ruan Yuan as an example of the 'intellectual unpreparedness for Western contact' on the part of Chinese officials of the early nineteenth century. Fairbank, p. 20. The sole source cited by him was *ECCP*, which did not look into how Ruan Yuan's compilations were organized. Nor did he appear to have checked H. B. Morse's works for Ruan Yuan's role in diplomatic affairs at Canton.

4. H. B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China* (1925) (Taipei reprint) III, p. 316.

5. Select Committee Reports on the East India Company and Trade with China 1821–31, *Parliamentary Papers* 36:540.

later with respect. ‘His conduct ... was both firm and conciliatory, and his memorials [*sic*] were admired by foreigners for their polite and dignified style ...’⁶ Captain Charles Elliot, British Superintendent of Trade at Canton since 1837, writing to Prime Minister Lord Palmerston on the eve of the Opium War, referred to Ruan Yuan as ‘a man of singular moderation and wisdom, and probably more versed in affairs of foreign trade and intercourse, than any statesman in the (Chinese) empire’.⁷ From 1817 to 1826, Ruan Yuan handled several crises over the issues of jurisdiction and foreign naval presence, and in the background, there loomed the controversy over opium. At one time, Ruan Yuan stopped British trade altogether, with the British factory moving out of Canton lock, stock, and barrel.

Documentation

Ruan Yuan’s work in Canton has been documented in both English and Chinese. British Parliamentary papers contain a number of reports from the East India Company as well as testimonies by private traders such as Jardine and Matheson. They offer a wealth of information on negotiations between the Chinese officials (in this case Ruan Yuan), the *hong* merchants, and foreign traders at Canton. *The Chinese Repository*, a monthly periodical printed in Canton and Macao from 1832 to 1851, contained references to Ruan Yuan. H. B. Morse’s detailed accounts of various controversial incidents, though biased in attitude and language, nevertheless bring to life frustrations felt by foreigners in Canton at that time. Without suffering moral compunction or legal restraint as experienced by Company spokesmen testifying at Parliamentary committees, Morse, writing as a historian, was frank in his discussions of opium as an important element in Sino-British trade and relations even after renewed Chinese prohibition in 1821. In contrast, very little information was offered by Ruan Yuan himself in his published personal papers on the handling of foreign relations.

It is fortunate, therefore, to have in print a collection of documents on foreign relations of the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns in *Materials on Foreign Relations of the Qing Dynasty (Qingdai Waijiao Shiliao 清代外交史料)*, published during the 1930s. In this collection there are several important memorials from Ruan Yuan. A copy of another document, outlining Ruan Yuan’s policy on dealing with the British, listed as missing in *Waijiao Shiliao*, has been located in the Qing Historiography Office archives. In addition, twentieth-century Chinese historians

6. *Chinese Repository* II:71–2 (June 1835).

7. As quoted in *Chinese Repository* XI:406 (August 1842).

and archivists have compiled detailed studies on the opium question leading to the war itself, including speculations on the role played by Ruan Yuan on specific issues related to the opium trade.⁸

Policy

Ruan Yuan saw the British as a serious threat to Chinese security, and considered them the most difficult among all foreigners at Canton to keep under control. The Qing court also suspected that the British were trying to expand their trade beyond Canton. In 1818, Ruan Yuan wrote to the emperor, urging the adoption of a firmer policy towards the British. He outlined in a secret memorial,

The British barbarians are arrogant and greedy. Judging by their current behaviour, we should display strength rather than kindness towards them. Were they allowed to continue to believe that they could extract from us everything they wanted, they would increase their demands even more. Their greed will become completely insatiable. As they have dared to penetrate into our coastal waters already, we should take this opportunity and punish them. We can discontinue their trade. We can also refuse to provision their ships. We can open fire on their ships. Our officers and troops at all coastal defence stations should be told to monitor British movements closely. The British are skilful on water, but, once on land, their strength is only negligible. Unlike the Japanese (*Wāko*), the British are not strong at hand-to-hand combat on land ... I am not trying to suggest that we take the initiative in starting an armed attack because serious consequences would result.⁹

The emperor, however, exhorted moderation. He restrained Ruan Yuan with this rescript, 'Adopt a policy showing both strength and kindness simultaneously. Do not over-react. Under no circumstance are you to take rash actions.'¹⁰ This theme was reiterated further by the emperor:

Foreign barbarians are not allowed to venture beyond our regulations governing their conduct. To those barbarians who obey our regulations, we offer kindness. To those who violate our regulations, we demonstrate our power. The English barbarians have permission to trade at Canton. The conditions for anchorage for their merchant vessels and escorting warships have all been specified. When they follow our regulations, we should treat them graciously. When they ignore these regulations, and when they entertain vain hopes of entering other ports in violation of our regulations, we must

8. See, for instance, Qi Sihe (齊思和) and others (eds.), *Yapian Zhanzheng* (鴉片戰爭) (1954); Xiao Zhizhi (蕭致治) and Yang Weidong (楊衛東) (eds.), *Yapian Zhanzheng Qian Zhongxi Guanxi Jishi 1517–1840* (鴉片戰爭前中西關係史) (1986).

9. Draft Biography of Ruan Yuan, No. 1266(1).

10. Draft Biography Imperial rescript.

remind them again that there are limitations. If, believing in their military superiority, they dare to sail straight into our ports, we must not refrain from displaying our strength. In short, the way to control the strangers is to keep reason always on our side, then our adversaries would have no excuse to take any kind of aggressive action. We must not give our adversaries the wrong impression that we are cowards, however.¹¹

In 1821, Daoguang, newly on the throne, came closer to Ruan Yuan's point of view on how to handle the British at Canton. A more stringent anti-opium policy was enforced, resulting in closer monitoring of activities and movements of foreigners in port. One reason for this change maybe the attempt made by the British to penetrate into northwest China.

British Traders in Xinjiang

The following year, officials at Kashgar reported the presence of two British traders near Yarkand in western Xinjiang.¹² These traders had entered the Chinese Empire through Kashmir and Tibet, and had travelled by camel across the Xinjiang deserts, but had sent the camels back when they were no longer suitable for the mountainous terrain.¹³ To the Qing court, the presence of these traders in Xinjiang was another indication that the British were seeking to expand trade beyond Canton. In light of the Amherst ships that had surveyed the Chinese coast a few years before, and in view of the intelligence brought by the Moslem traders that the British were already in control of both Kashmir and Afghanistan, the new emperor was willing to let Ruan Yuan adopt a harsher line in Canton. In fact, Ruan Yuan was called to Beijing shortly after the news of the presence of the British traders in Xinjiang reached the emperor.¹⁴ He was in Beijing for almost a month, from 28 May to 25 June 1822. During this period he saw the emperor five times. After returning to Canton, he continued to enforce this hard-line policy throughout the remainder of his term.

Ruan Yuan retained his interests in the British even after he left Canton. Some time during the 1830s, when the opium issue was turning into a full-scale crisis, Ruan Yuan, then in his late seventies and in retirement, wrote to Yilibu (伊里布 d. 1843), who was actively engaged in the opium negotiations for the Qing court. By that time, Ruan Yuan must have realized that British strength on land was much stronger than he had estimated earlier. In one of his letters to Yilibu,

11. *Waijiao Shiliao* JQ6:476. The court letter was dated JQ23/5/11 (1818/6/14).

12. *Waijiao Shiliao* DG1:11b.

13. *Waijiao Shiliao* DG1:20–1b.

14. *Diziji* 5:26.

he had counselled ‘to give the British trade to the Americans. Let these two countries fight it out. Do not become involved in a direct military confrontation with the British.’¹⁵ This line of thinking was consistent with traditional Chinese policy of using one group of barbarians to control another.

The Amherst Mission

The mission of 1816 led by Lord Amherst represented a failed British attempt to change the Canton system. The British emissaries succeeded neither in seeing the Jiaqing Emperor nor in discussing with any Chinese official the issues they had come to raise. On the other hand, the five ships that carried the mission to Dagū (大沽) had managed to survey the Chinese coast from Dagū to Canton. On 14 August 1816, Lord Amherst and his party were heading for Beijing, with the issue of the *kowtow* still unresolved. The ships, after being provisioned with ‘beef, mutton, chickens, ducks, fruit, vegetables and fresh water’,¹⁶ disappeared from their mooring place outside Dagū and sailed to Canton to await the mission there. Without these ships, the mission had to be escorted back to Canton by land, causing additional trouble and expense to the Chinese court. In addition, this act of sending away the ships without first notifying the Chinese officials of their intentions irked the emperor even more. Officials at Canton were instructed to keep a watchful eye on British naval presence.

Defence of Canton

Ruan Yuan was appointed to Canton in the wake of this crisis. There is no evidence that he was sent to this coastal province with a serious problem in security and control because of his earlier experience in coastal defence. On the other hand, less than a week after his arrival at Canton, Ruan Yuan inspected the defence stations in the Pearl estuary outside Boca Tigris in the company of the Commander-in-Chief of the Guangdong Marine Force.¹⁷ They visited fortifications and gun batteries along the coast, on the offshore islands, and paid a visit to the Portuguese-built forts in Macao. Navigation channels were well protected, Ruan Yuan thought.

The western channel of the Pearl estuary from Macao where the barbarians live to Canton is too shallow for foreign vessels with a deep draft. The only way for the ships to enter

15. Memorial from Ruan Yuan dated 1841, in *Chouban Yiwu Shimo* (籌辦夷務始末) DG 21:21b–2b.

16. *Waijiao Shiliao* JQ5:36.

17. *Diziji* 5:10b–11.

the estuary, therefore, is by way of the Nantou Channel. The ships then proceed northward between Lintin Island and the Nantou Peninsula, then straight up the Boca Tigris and into the Pearl River.¹⁸

Ruan Yuan had found the military installations outside the Boca Tigris adequate. Lintin was known as the Outer Anchorage, where foreign ships waited to pay their duties to the Superintendent of Customs. Here, ships were also provisioned with fresh water and other supplies. From Lintin, the ships sailed into the Pearl estuary, watched on the east by batteries on the Nantou Peninsula. From there, they proceeded into the Boca Tigris. Chuenpee and Annuhoy, both fortified, were on the west, and the promontory of the island of Tycocktow, also fortified, were on the east.

Defences inside the Boca Tigris, on the other hand, were less than satisfactory. Immediately upon his return to Canton, he memorialized for the emperor's approval to construct several forts.¹⁹ Apparently he was so impressed with the Portuguese forts at Macao, especially Fortaleza da Santiago, built in 1629, that he copied its design for a fort on Tiger Island, situated immediately inside the Boca Tigris.²⁰

Ruan Yuan was proud of this fort, financed by the *hong* merchants to the tune of 60,000 taels, both for its strategic location and for its equipment.²¹ He found 'the currents at this point of the river to be so swift that vessels must sail close to the island within the range of its guns. By constructing a fort on this island and placing within it thirty guns weighing from two thousand to seven thousand *jin* each, ... Canton can be protected.'²² An article on 'military skill and power of the Chinese' in the August 1836 issue of *The Chinese Repository* showed British assessment of the strategic location of the fort to be 'formidable'²³ as 'vessels drawing over two fathoms (are) compelled to pass under the guns on Tiger Island'.²⁴ The author of the article, however, did not share Ruan Yuan's enthusiasm for the capacity of his artillery. Ruan Yuan had equipped this fort with as many European-made guns as he could muster, supplementing them with those of Chinese manufacture. These guns were thought to be 'Portuguese

18. *Xinhui Xianzhi* 12:1b.

19. *YJSJ* II:7:24–25b.

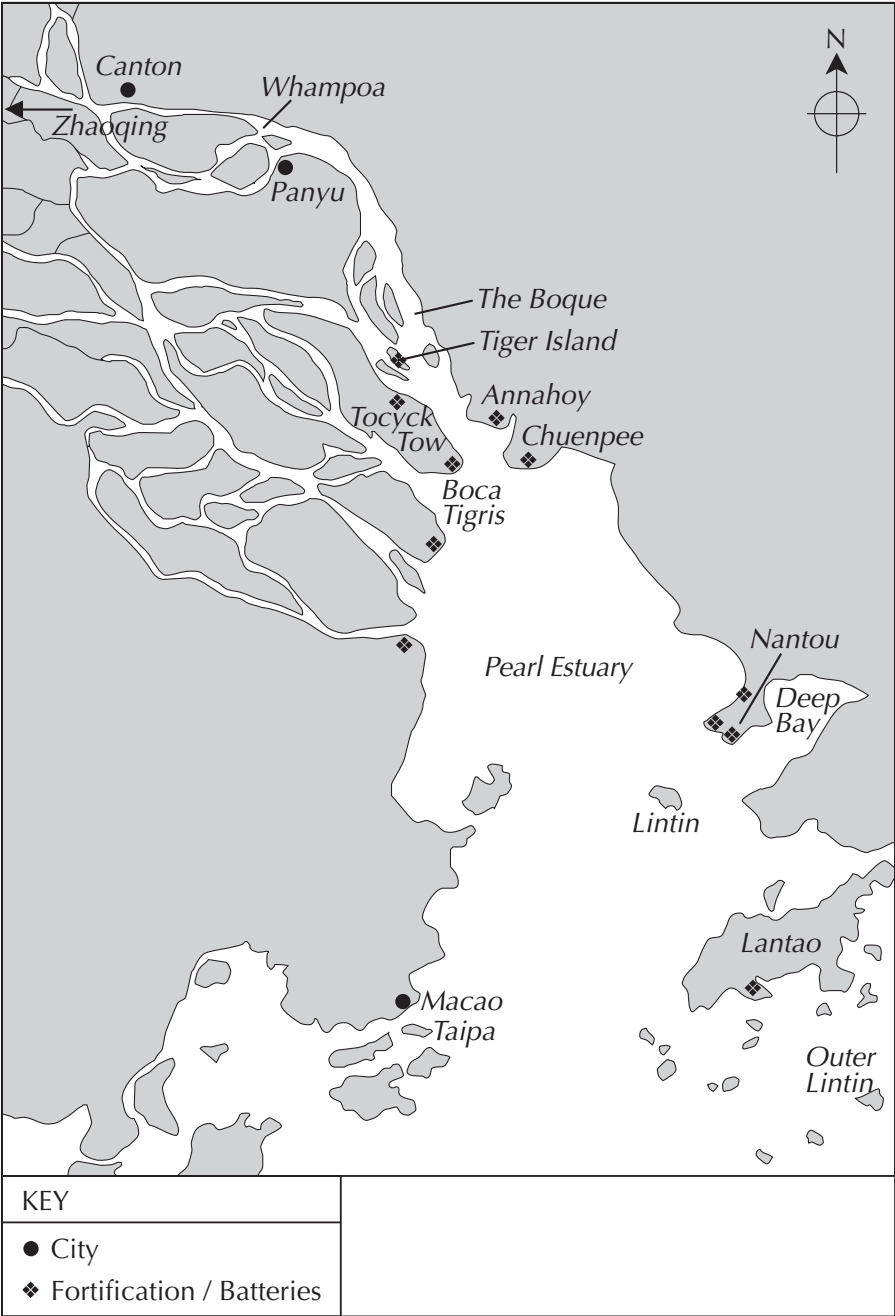
20. I am grateful to Father Benjamin Videira Pires of Macao, who took me to visit the fort in December 1979, It was being demolished to make room for a hotel.

21. *Diziji* 5:11.

22. *YJSJ* II 7:24–5b.

23. *Chinese Repository* V:4:167.

24. *Chinese Repository* V:4:167.



Map 6.1 The Pearl Estuary, 1816–25

or Dutch pieces, of every age, length, shape and calibre; and not a few of them so old and honeycombed as to be useless'.²⁵ In 1834, two British frigates, the *Andromache* and the *Imogene*, were shelled for more than two days by the guns from Tiger Island. Suffering no fatality and very little damage, the frigates were able to sail up to Canton, proving once for all the ineffectiveness of the guns.²⁶

Canton

Beyond Tiger Island up the river, there were sand banks, hazardous to navigation but providing good natural defence for the Chinese against invaders from the sea. Above the sandbanks, lying just off Canton, was the island of Whampoa. Across from Whampoa on the north was the waterfront of Canton, where the foreign factories were located. Here, in the harbour, ships waited to discharge and receive cargo. C. Toogood Downing, as he entered the Canton harbour for the first time in 1836, saw a scene that had remained largely unchanged since the day Ruan Yuan left Canton a decade before.

Many descriptions of the town of boats at Canton have been given, but none of them I should think can convey to the reader a distinct idea of this wonderful place, unequalled in singularity by any other spot on the surface of the globe. The crowd of boats of all sizes, shapes, and colours, passing in every direction, with the hubbub and glamour of ten thousand different sounds coming from every quarter and with every variety of intonation, make an impression almost similar to that of awe upon the first visit of the stranger.²⁷

Among the ships espied by Downing were war vessels of the provincial marine force. He noted that the hulls of these ships were painted black

with large white ports. They (the ports) do not open, however, for the guns to be run out, but are artificial, being merely painted white, with red and yellow characters in the centre of them. The few guns which belong to them are fastened upon swivels, and are worked upon the main deck. Made of bad metal and small in calibre, they are decked out with flags and other ornaments, as if they were intended to be seen more than to be heard.²⁸

Ruan Yuan would have agreed with these observations. Similar problems plagued the Guandong coastal defence as those he had to face in Zhejiang earlier.

25. *Chinese Repository* V:4:167.

26. *Chinese Repository* V:4:168.

27. C. Toogood Downing, *The Fan-qui in China in 1836–7* (1838), I, pp. 231–2.

28. Downing, I, p. 115.

He had made recommendations to the emperor to remodel certain classes of war vessels and to eliminate others altogether. Judging by the fact that so many of these classes of ships were listed in *The Chinese Repository* as late as 1851 as Chinese war vessels still in operation, Ruan Yuan could not have been successful in persuading the emperor to follow his recommendations entirely.

Ruan Yuan did, however, succeed in increasing the number of troops both on the ships and on land in the two provinces under his jurisdiction. By 1821, he had added 6,490 men in Guangdong and 2,153 in Guangxi, making a total of 69,305 foot soldiers in Guangdong and 23,583 in Guangxi. He reduced the number of cavalry soldiers by 535 in Guangdong and by 630 in Guangxi, giving as a reason that fighting on horseback was impractical given the terrain of the two provinces.²⁹

Qing Officials at Canton

In addition to the Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi, two other high-level civil officials at Canton were responsible to the emperor on foreign trade and foreigners in port. They were the Governor of Guangdong and the Superintendent of Customs. During the decade Ruan Yuan was in Canton, the post of governor was held by no fewer than six different men. In the interim between the appointments, Ruan Yuan was also Acting Governor. Therefore, during seven out of the ten years he was in Canton, for a certain period each year, he was both Governor-General and Governor concurrently.³⁰ The Superintendent of Customs at Canton, known to Westerners as the Hoppo, was a Manchu, a member of the Imperial Household Department (*Neiwu fu* 內務府).³¹ From 1750 onward, the ‘superintendents were ordered to report tax receipts together with the governor-general’.³² During this period under our consideration, official communications to the foreigners at Canton were frequently issued in the names of both Ruan Yuan and the Hoppo, through the intermediary, the *hong* merchants.

29. Draft Biography No. 1266 (1).

30. 1818:6/9–8/23; 1819:6/20–8/24; 1820:2/26–7/8; 1821:7/29–1822:2/1; 1823:2/16–5/12; 1825:10/2–11/6.

31. Preston Torbert, in *The Ch'ing Imperial Household Department* (1977) observed that as early as 1727 funds from the Canton Customs had been delivered to the Privy Purse instead of the Board of Revenue. Thus, ‘the delivery of funds from the Canton customs to the Privy Purse ... have been linked to the appointment of Imperial Household personnel as superintendents’, p. 99.

32. Torbert, p. 103.

Hong Merchants

The *Co-hong* was a guild organized in 1720 by the *hong* merchants of Guangdong and Fujian who were franchised by the court to trade with foreigners. After 1782, its members controlled the foreign trade at Canton altogether. The *hong*, as well as individual *hong* merchants, rose and fell with regularity during this era. The record of cash gifts from the *hong* merchants in 1819 to Jiaqing on his sixtieth birthday and the list compiled in 1822 when the foreign factories and warehouses belonged to the *hongs* were destroyed by fire give the names of the *hong* merchants.³³ From these lists, and from other information given in English-language and Chinese-language sources, such as *The Chronicles of the East India Company* by H. B. Morse and *An Examination into the Thirteen Hongs of Canton (Guangdong Shisan Hangkao 廣東十三行考)* by Liang Jiabin (梁嘉彬), a list of the *hongs* and *hong* merchants of the period when Ruan Yuan was in Canton can be compiled.

Table 6.1 *Hong* merchants of Canton, 1817–26

Foreign Names	Chinese Names	
Howqua II (Puiqua)	Wu Donyuan	伍敦元
Mowqua	Lu Guanheng	盧觀恒
Chunqua	Liu Dezhang	劉德章
Punkhequa	Pan Zhencheng (d. 1821)	潘振承
Heemqua	Pan Zhixiang	潘致祥
Tinqa	Zhang Dianquan	張殿銓
Exchin (Pakqua)	Li Guangyuan	黎光遠
Manhop	Guan Chengfa	關成發
Goqua	Xie Jiawu	謝嘉梧
Kinqa	Liang Jingguo	梁經國
Fatqua	Li Xiefa	李協發
Conseequa	Pan Changyao (d. 1822)	潘長耀
Poonequa	Mai Jinting	麥覲廷

The unique functions served by the *hong* merchants gave them certain privileges. These privileges carried obligations without necessarily exempting them from prosecutions should they fall afoul of the law. Merchants in China were outside the official hierarchy, but the wealthy merchants, such as the salt merchants of Yangzhou and the *hong* merchants of Canton, were expected to

33. WJD, no pagination. Copy of memorial from Ruan Yuan, dated DG1/11/19 (1821/12/13).

shoulder responsibilities traditionally expected from the local gentry, such as supporting the Xuehaitang (學海堂) and its publications. In addition, these *hong* merchants had to assume financial responsibilities for other public projects during this period as well, such as construction and provisioning of the Tiger Island fort.

Several *hong* merchants had been awarded honorary official ranks with attendant perquisites. Even more than the officials who had earned their ranks by passing examinations, these merchants with honorary ranks were subject to imperial pique and official discipline. The second merchant by the name or title of Howqua, also known as Puiqua, Wu Dunyuan, for instance, enjoyed the honoraria of a third-rank official in happier days, including the visible symbol of a blue sapphire button of the third-rank official on his hat.³⁴ He had worked closely with Ruan Yuan involving foreigners from 1820 to 1823. Even then, Wu, chief of the *hong* merchants, had to take the blame for the increase in opium traffic at that time. In 1821, at the suggestion of Ruan Yuan, Wu's button was removed by imperial decree.

Wu Dunyuan, as chief of the *hong* merchants, appears to be leading the others in conniving with foreigners to smuggle opium into the Chinese Empire. To date, no *hong* merchant has yet reported the presence of this contraband item on any of the ships he is securing. Meanwhile, opium import continues to be on the increase. Wu's rank and button should be removed herewith.³⁵

The *hong* merchants were called upon to 'make contributions' to various government programmes or to commemorate certain occasions. This kind of contributions was tantamount to paying taxes, a means for provincial officials to raise revenue during the mid-Qing era. Ruan Yuan decided on what the merchants should give as the sixtieth birthday present to Jiaqing, for instance.

(Ruan Yuan) fixed upon the Sum of 300,000 Taels as an Offering on the part of the *Hong* Merchants to the Emperor upon the attainment of his sixtieth year, which will take place this year, and which Sum is to be levied in Cash in two instalments in proportion to the respective amount of duties paid to Government by each *Hong*.³⁶

Following Ruan Yuan's proposal, the *hong* merchants duly offered to the emperor the gift of 300,000 taels, two-thirds of which was 'accepted' with each merchant

34. Four men were known by the name (or title) of Howqua. They were Puiqua (Hawqua II), his father Wu Guoyong (Hawqua I) before him, his two sons, Wu Shouchang (Howqua III) and Wu Congyao (Howqua IV).

35. WJD. DG1/11.

36. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 334.

paying a specified amount.³⁷ The record of the Salt Administration of Guangdong and Guangxi showed that, in 1820, the *hong* merchants and salt merchants of Canton contributed 300,000 taels, and again 500,000 taels more, to ‘military and engineering expenses’. There was a further contribution of 600,000 taels ‘to help suppress the Kashgar Rebellion in 1826’³⁸ when Ruan Yuan was at Canton.

The working relationship between the *hong* merchants and the foreign traders at Canton was in general a cordial one. The currency used in foreign trade was the Spanish dollar. The language used in foreign trade was English. There were interpreters, known as linguists. The best known foreign linguist was Dr Robert Morrison, a British missionary who had mastered Chinese. The *hong* merchants themselves tended to use ‘pidgin’, a mixture of Chinese, English, Parsee, and Portuguese. The foreigners thought that the *hong* merchants as a whole were ‘honourable and reliable in all their dealings, faithful to their contracts, and large — as opposed to narrow — minded’.³⁹ As can be seen from the existence of the Consoo fund and advances in both directions, foreigners and the *hong* merchants worked well together under ordinary circumstances. In cases of dispute between the foreign and *hong* merchants, settlements were usually made by arbitration.⁴⁰

Ruan Yuan and Sino-British Relations

It was in criminal cases involving foreigners that the *hong* merchant’s position as intermediary between the foreigners and the Chinese authorities took on special significance. Chinese authorities handled cases when Chinese nationals were the offenders like any other case. When a foreigner was the offender, especially if the death of a Chinese was involved, a crisis situation invariably developed. Only rarely, if ever, did foreign merchants become involved in such criminal cases directly. Sailors from foreign vessels, both merchant ships and warships, were the chief offenders. ‘The most undesirable consequences may result from the rash and improper conduct of seamen,’⁴¹ the *Chinese Repository* was to pronounce in 1834. Since the 1810s, there had been a standing order from the

37. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 352.

38. *Liangguang Yanfa Zhi* (兩廣鹽法志) [Salt Gazetteer of Guangdong and Guangxi], *juan* on JQ (1835).

39. W. C. Hunter, *The ‘Fan Kwae’ at Canton Before Treaty Days* (1822) (Taipei reprint), p. 40.

40. H. F. McNair, *Modern Chinese History: Selected Readings* (1913) I, p. 42.

41. *Chinese Repository* V:2:422 (January 1834).

British that ‘no boat’s crew are to stop overnight at Canton’,⁴² thus reducing the number of such incidents. A spokesman for the British East India Company at Canton reported that by bribing Chinese officials at the scene, matters could be settled at the outset, but, once higher officials in Canton became aware of the situation, there would be serious consequences, especially when there was loss of life.⁴³ Perhaps this practice explains why only a handful of such cases were found in official records. When an incident involving foreigners did occur, the Governor-General, the Governor of Guangdong, the prefect and magistrate of the county where the crime had taken place, the security merchant for the particular ship involved, the supercargo of the ship, the leading trader from the country whose national had committed the offence, and the Select Committee, as spokesmen for the foreign community at Canton, all would become embroiled.

Before the Treaty of Nanking (1842) established extraterritoriality, foreigners who committed crimes in Chinese territory or Chinese waters were to be handed over to Chinese authorities and punished according to Chinese law. This policy would have been universally recognized, except for the fact that the Chinese concept of justice was alien, and therefore unacceptable, to those of the Anglo-American tradition. The doctrine of collective responsibility upon which the *baojia* system was based made the entire neighbourhood responsible for actions of each resident of the neighbourhood. If a law-breaker managed to escape, another person of his unit would be punished in his place. Although temporary foreign residents in their factories at Canton or on their vessels in port had not been incorporated into a *baojia* unit of their own, the doctrine of collective responsibility would still apply. On the other hand, in the tradition of Anglo-American law and justice, punishment would be meted out only to the actual offender in person, and only after his guilt had been established by a jury of his peers in open trial at a court of law. These two concepts and systems of justice clashed at Canton.

The Lady Hughes

Since 1784, foreigners had been decrying the barbarity of Chinese justice. On 24 November that year, a British vessel, the *Lady Hughes*, fired a salute at Canton. Unfortunately, the gun was loaded and the gunfire injured three Chinese officials, two of whom died. By Chinese reckoning, the gunner of the *Lady Hughes*, in

42. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 377.

43. Extract of letter from the Select Committee to the Court of Directors, East India Company, in *Parliamentary Papers*, 21:104.

firing the gun, had committed murder; therefore he was to be punished under Chinese law. When the British refused to surrender the gunner, Chinese authorities at Canton seized the supercargo of the British factory, isolated the factory itself, and stopped British trade. The British then yielded and the gunner was surrendered to the Chinese. He met the fate of apprehended Chinese murderers, and was put to death swiftly by strangulation. This incident brought to the fore foreign objections to the Canton system. Subsequently, foreigners in China, the British in particular, were reluctant to hand over their nationals to Chinese authorities. The Chinese, meanwhile, insisted on the right to jurisdiction in their own land, thus leading to periodic impasses.

The Wabash, 1818

Ruan Yuan's first criminal case involving local residents and foreigners was a straightforward one for him to handle, for the offenders were Chinese. Their offence was comparable to piracy, a subject with which Ruan Yuan was familiar. So he applied the laws on armed robbery involving vessels. An American ship, the *Wabash*, was docked at the anchorage at Taipa Island off Macao on 19 June 1818. A group of Chinese onshore hurled verbal insults at the seamen, then boarded the vessel and plundered it. The raiding party left three American seamen wounded, one of whom later died. Among the spoils taken were *sycee* silver and a quantity of opium.⁴⁴ The presence of opium had complicated the case considerably. It also provided Ruan Yuan with the ammunition to deal harshly with the *hong* merchants.

Although ruled by the Portuguese, Macao was under the administrative jurisdiction of the County of Xiangshan (香山), in the province of Guangdong. The Select Committee and a representative of the American merchants in Canton, referred by Morse as 'the American consul', brought complaint against the Chinese to Ruan Yuan through Puiqua. Fully cognizant of the reality and implications of the circumstances — that the Chinese were wrong in boarding and plundering a foreign vessel in Chinese waters, resulting in loss of life, Ruan Yuan offered a reward of three thousand dollars for the apprehension of the perpetrators. He refused to compensate for the opium, which was contraband. The *sycee* silver would be contraband also had it been exported from China, but, as the ship had not yet entered a Chinese port, he would not argue this point. After two weeks of negotiations, the captain of the ship received from the Chinese authorities 824.50 dollars which had been recovered from the

44. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 318.

culprits, two thousand dollars from the security merchant, and another four thousand from funds under Ruan Yuan's control, in compensation for the specie taken. Nothing was paid for the opium, but no immediate action was taken against the ship for having contraband on board in Chinese waters either. Immediately thereafter, the ship slipped away from Taipa in order to avoid further complications on the opium issue.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, the Chinese culprits faced the full force of the law. Five men were arrested for looting the *Wabash* and for murdering the foreigner. They were beheaded or put to death by the slow process of slicing off the limbs before being decapitated.⁴⁶ This was the traditional Chinese punishment for captured pirates who had raided ships. Ruan Yuan further assigned the security merchant to subscribe to certain public service projects to the tune of 160,000 taels.⁴⁷ Subsequently, the *hong* merchants announced to the foreign traders that they would no longer 'secure any ship whose commander has not signed a Bond, engaging that he will not smuggle Opium, ...'⁴⁸ They also relayed Ruan Yuan's warning that Chinese authorities intended to search every ship. While the foreign community debated, the intended search was dropped by Ruan Yuan. Perhaps one reason for his decision not to insist upon the search was the presence of an armed British frigate in the Pearl Estuary. He was also under orders from the emperor not to take rash actions. He was not to take such a strong stand again on the opium issue until 1821.

The London, 1820

The killing of one Chinese man and wounding of three Chinese boys in Panyu by a crew member of a British vessel, the *London*, on 27 November 1820, was Ruan Yuan's first major crisis involving foreigners who had committed a crime against Chinese nationals under his jurisdiction. His memorial on this case is in *Waijiao Shiliao*.⁴⁹ The British version of the controversy was given by Morse, while more documents can be found in the *British Parliamentary Papers*.⁵⁰ Ruan Yuan's memorial contained more details on the personalities involved and provided the only information on actual negotiations that led to the final resolution of the crisis.

45. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 320.

46. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 320.

47. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 320.

48. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 320.

49. *Waijiao Shiliao* JQ6:57–9b.

50. Letter from the Select Committee, *Parliamentary Papers*, 21:537–9.

The facts in both versions, with the exception of the name of the British seaman who fired the musket that killed and injured the Chinese on shore, were substantially the same. On 27 November 1820, in broad daylight, a cutter from the *London*, a ship belonging to the East India Company, sailed ‘a considerable distance’⁵¹ beyond Whampoa into a branch stream of the Pearl River in search for fresh water’.⁵² On the cutter were the fifth mate of the *London*, a man by the name of Pigott, and five other crewmen. They had a musket with them aboard the cutter. Upon landing at Panyu, the men were taunted by a number of boys throwing stones and shouting ‘obscenities’.⁵³ To frighten away the boys, Pigott fired two volleys, the first one loaded with peas and the second what he thought was ‘blanks’⁵⁴ but which turned out to be live ammunition. A Zhang Shuncun (張順存), who was hanging up laundry at the stern of a Chinese rice boat nearby, shouted at the boys to desist and disperse. Pigott’s next shot entered Zhang’s chest on the left side, killing him instantly. Meanwhile, three boys, all surnamed Chen (陳), were wounded on the nose, foot, and toes, respectively.⁵⁵ While pandemonium broke ashore, the cutter departed, pursued by two small Chinese boats, thus it was ascertained that the cutter had come from the *London*.⁵⁶ Later on, despite Pigott’s assertion that he had fired what he believed to be blanks, indicating that at least he had been aware of the consequences of his shooting at that time, the British spokesman claimed that they had known nothing about the incident until two days later, when Puiqua brought them the news that a warrant had been issued by the Chinese authorities for the arrest of the murderer at Panyu.⁵⁷

Normal Chinese procedure under the circumstances would be to stop the offending ship from discharging and loading cargo, while demanding that the criminal be remanded to Chinese authorities. After being informed of the incident, Ruan Yuan gave instructions to the *hong* merchants to notify the Select Committee to hand over the murderer to Chinese authorities. Although the security merchant in this case was Exchin, because of the seriousness of the case, it was Puiqua who went to the British factory to apprise the Committee of the existence of the warrant.⁵⁸ The Committee then proclaimed their total ignorance

51. *Waijiao Shiliao* JQ6:57.

52. *Waijiao Shiliao* JQ6:57.

53. *Waijiao Shiliao* JQ6:57.

54. Letter from the Select Committee, *Parliamentary Papers* 21:537.

55. *Waijiao Shiliao* JQ6:57b.

56. Letter from the Select Committee, *Parliamentary Papers* 21:537.

57. Letter from the Select Committee, *Parliamentary Papers* 21:537.

58. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 381. In the listing of Company ships at Canton 1805–20, however, the security merchant for the *London* is given as Kinqu; Morse, *Chronicles*, end paper.

of the incident until that moment. They suggested that Puiqua should bribe the Chinese officials, but the *hong* merchant did not support the idea. Meanwhile, the Committee's primary consideration remained 'to avoid trouble and embarrassment to the Company's trade',⁵⁹ but Ruan Yuan had already placed a restraint order on the *London*.

Three days later, on 2 December, when official communications arrived, the British announced that Pigott had 'absconded'⁶⁰ during the early morning hours on the day before. Chinese officials were permitted to search the *London* (in contravention to the Company's stand in the case involving the *Wabash* two years before), as well as the *Duke of York*, another Company ship at Whampoa. After the officials left, Barrowcliff, the butcher on board the *Duke of York*, who had no visible connection with the case or with Pigott, suddenly went berserk and slashed his own throat. It was under these circumstances that the British seized upon the idea of giving to Ruan Yuan the story that Barrowcliff had been the murderer at Panyu, and that his suicide had taken place because he was fearful of Chinese justice. The *hong* merchants, enthusiastically supporting this suggestion, went together at once to the factory. By this switch, trouble was saved for all parties concerned.

The plan was thus communicated through the *hong* merchants to the Chinese authorities, Ruan Yuan, who, while preferring a live culprit to a dead one, 'privately'⁶¹ was willing to accept Barrowcliff in order to keep the incident from developing into an even more major crisis.⁶² Dr Morrison was sent for from Macao, indicating the seriousness with which foreign merchants were viewing this case. In actuality, from the Chinese perspective of collective responsibility, the substitution of a criminal with another person was acceptable. This was a case of paying for one life with another. Even so, Ruan Yuan was not willing to let the *hong* merchants and foreign traders get away so lightly. On 4 December, Ruan Yuan wrote to the *hong* merchants to say that the supercargo of the Company 'must immediately deliver the foreign murderer, if not, then not Cameron's ship (the *Duke of York*) only, but every English ship shall have her Port Clearance stopped'.⁶³ This communication, despite its harsh tone, indicated Ruan Yuan's

59. Letter from the Select Committee, *Parliamentary Papers* 21:537.

60. *Parliamentary Papers* 21:537. After the crisis was over, it was revealed that Pigott had hidden on a British warship, the HMS *Liverpool*, then moored at Lintin. Bad weather had prevented him from returning to the *London* before the ship left China, but he did return to England at a later date. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 382.

61. Letter from the Select Committee, *Parliamentary Papers* 21:539. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 380.

62. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 381.

63. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 381.

willingness to accept the plan of making use of the dead Barrowcliff as he had changed the name of the offending ship from the *London* to the *Duke of York*.

Thereupon, Chinese officials were permitted to board the *Duke of York* to hold an inquest on the death of Barrowcliff in the presence of the ship's commanding officer, Captain Cameron. Meanwhile, families and friends of the dead and the injured at Panyu 'were carefully instructed so that they testified to the truth and nothing but the truth, but not necessarily the whole truth'.⁶⁴ The statement that Barrowcliff had taken his own life in a fit of remorse was accepted by Chinese officials at the inquest. Based on their verdict, legally arrived at from the Chinese perspective, Ruan Yuan reported Barrowcliff as the guilty party in his memorial to the emperor dated 12 December 1820. It was at this time that he wrote a secret memorial proposing that strong measures be adopted to control the British, and receiving in return instructions from the emperor to hold to a more moderate line.

The Terranova Case, 1821

Perhaps Ruan Yuan displayed a willingness to make the best of a situation in the Barrowcliff case, the kind of co-operative spirit that led the British to refer to him as a 'man of singular moderation and wisdom'⁶⁵ only because no opium had been involved. Subsequently, he was to take a much stronger stand.

The next major crisis over jurisdiction took place not quite a year later. By then, the new emperor had proclaimed a policy to tighten the laws prohibiting the importation of opium and the exportation of silver. In October 1821, Terranova, an Italian seaman serving on an American ship, the *Emily*, accidentally killed a Chinese boat woman. He was sacrificed to Chinese justice in order to prevent authorities in Canton from looking further into the hold and discovering the opium which was on various foreign ships in port at that time.

The Terranova case is well known in the West as it is often cited as an example of the barbarity of Chinese justice. Terranova, who had been turned over to the Chinese officials, was strangled to death as punishment for having taken a life. Morse reported the case in an appendix to his accounts of the activities of the Company for the year 1821.⁶⁶ Ruan Yuan's memorial on this case is reprinted in *Waijiao Shiliao*.⁶⁷ A working copy of this original memorial, and the accompanying

64. Morse, *Chronicles* III, p. 381.

65. Eliot to Palmerston, as cited in *Chinese Repository* IX:406 (August 1842).

66. Morse, *Chronicles* IV, p. 23.

67. *Waijiao Shiliao* DG1:7b–9b.

one that removed Puiqua's button, both dated DG1/10/14 (5 November 1821), are in the record book (*Waijidang*) of the Grand Council of that month.⁶⁸ An American account of the incident printed in the *North American Review* (January 1835) was also extracted in the *Chinese Repository*.⁶⁹

From the memorial the facts of the case became clear, as were the charges against Terranova. On 29 September 1821, a boat woman, Guo-Liang (郭梁氏), who spoke 'pidgin', sculled her sampan to the *Emily*, peddling fruit. Terranova, leaning against the railing of the ship above her, lowered to her five copper cash in a basket tied to a rope into which she placed some fruit. This was the usual practice of vending when the parties were on two levels. Not satisfied with the amount of fruit he had been given, Terranova bargained further. Somehow, the argument became heated, ending with Terranova throwing a ceramic jar at the woman, hitting her on the head, cracking her hat, causing her to fall into the water, and resulting in her death. This case had to be viewed as a serious matter, for, in addition to murder, there were other violations of trade regulations. Terranova, as a foreigner, was buying goods from a Chinese vendor directly without going through the regular channel of a *hong* merchant. The security merchant of the *Emily* was Exchin, but, as in other serious cases over jurisdiction, Puiqua, as head of the *hong* merchants, was also involved.

Ruan Yuan's investigations showed that the act of Terranova throwing the jar had been witnessed by another boat woman, Chen-li Shi, who immediately shouted for help. An employee of the Canton Customs, in a boat nearby, made an attempt at rescue, but did not succeed. The body of the dead woman was not pulled out of the water until her husband arrived at the scene a while later. The injury on the woman's head was a cut that had gone all the way to the bone.⁷⁰ The captain and the owner of the American ship both inspected the wound of the dead woman, and pronounced that 'the woman in reality died from head injury and from drowning'.⁷¹

The Americans agreed to submit Terranova to a Chinese official investigation, provided that the hearings were conducted on the *Emily* in the presence of Americans. As a compromise, the Chinese agreed to this condition provided that the 'ceremony'⁷² of charging the prisoner was conducted on a Chinese war vessel that was to carry the Chinese officials to the American ship. On 6 October, Captain Cowpland cleared all firearms from the deck of the *Emily*, stationed all

68. WJD-DG1/11.

69. *Chinese Repository* V:223 (September 1836).

70. WJD-DG1/11.

71. WJD-DG1/11.

72. Morse, *Chronicles* IV, p. 23.

hands at the forecandle, had Terranova without handcuffs brought on deck, and waited for the arrival of the Chinese officials. The Chinese officials were headed by the Prefect of Canton. Eight *hong* merchants were in attendance.⁷³ The service of Dr Morrison, then attached to the British factory, as a translator was refused because Ruan Yuan did not want to involve a third nation.⁷⁴ After a lengthy debate during which Captain Cowpland argued successfully that no American prisoner was ever in irons during a trial, Terranova was 'surrendered' to the Chinese with Puiqua pledging his safe return for trial on the *Emily*.

Testimonies of witnesses at the trial were somewhat different from the facts ascertained earlier. The Americans objected to the magistrate's allowing the presence of two children who were prompting the witness, and demanded that she speak in English, as her command of the language was superior to that of the translator. The woman stood on the latter version of her testimony.⁷⁵ At the end of the session Captain Cowpland refused to hand over the prisoner. The Chinese proceeded to put the ship's security merchant and the Chinese linguist in chains. With the overwhelming number of Chinese on board and opium in the hold of the *Emily*, Terranova was allowed to be taken off the ship by the Chinese.

The British argued that the Americans should not have yielded, complaining that they had 'abandoned a man serving under their flag to the sanguinary laws of this Empire without an endeavour to obtain common justice for him'.⁷⁶ The eventual surrender of Terranova to the Chinese authorities seems to give further credence to the Chinese version of the facts. Nevertheless, the underlying reason for this surrender remained the fear that unless the seaman was given up, the Chinese authorities would search the ship and find opium.

Ruan Yuan and the Opium Issue at Canton

By the time Ruan Yuan arrived at Canton, the Chinese had already known opium for more than a thousand years, and, for nearly a century, there had been statutes prohibiting its sale and use. By the eighteenth century, the use of this definitely addictive substance became so widespread that as early as 1729 domestic sale and consumption of opium was forbidden by an imperial decree. In 1796, Jiaqing prohibited the importation and domestic cultivation of the poppy as well. Since then, all opium imported into China was through smuggling. Whereas American

73. WJD-DG1/11.

74. WJD-DG1/11.

75. *Chinese Repository* V:5:23.

76. Morse, *Chronicles* IV, p. 26.

ships brought opium grown in Turkey, the British cultivated poppies in India and brought opium into China. Selling this commodity for cash only, the British had hoped to reverse the balance of trade at China's expense. In 1821, to put an end to this smuggling of opium into China and silver in the reverse direction, Daoguang reiterated the anti-opium policy. As a result, Ruan Yuan adopted strict measures against opium importation through the port of Canton. This thinking was behind his taking action against the *hong* merchants later on that year in the wake of the Terranova crisis, especially when he removed the button from Puigua's hat.

In his memorial requesting the removal of Puigua's button, Ruan Yuan showed his attitude on opium. He memorialized the emperor on the harmful effects of opium addition. 'Opium is grown overseas, but its harmful effects are felt most keenly in interior China. Its most serious damage lies in the moral degradation of the populace.'⁷⁷ The memorial also showed that Ruan Yuan had known the sources of opium. He told the emperor that there were three major groups of foreign traders who brought opium to China from West Asia and India.

Three major groups of foreign traders are the source for our opium. Among them are a number of merchants who come from across the ocean to India and who pick up cargo of opium on their way to China. The Company, franchised by the British sovereign to trade, does not officially engage in the opium trade itself. The British merchants bring this commodity into Macao in their private capacities. The American ship owners and captains constitute the last group of opium smugglers. They, not having any king or emperor to restrain them, bring in the commodity in the holds of their ships.⁷⁸

Ruan Yuan also blamed the *hong* merchants for helping the foreign smugglers by providing them with marketing machinery to distribute opium. For this reason, Ruan Yuan placed the responsibility for the thriving illicit opium trade squarely on the shoulders of the *hong* merchants.

The *hong* merchants are so close to the foreign traders that, although their smuggling activities could be kept from the officials, it is impossible for the *hong* merchants not to be aware of them. How can foreigners bring contraband commodities for such a long distance without being assured of a market here first? They, therefore, must work hand-in-glove with the *hong* merchants. The *hong* merchants appear to consider only their own profits, completely disregarding the damages opium addiction has upon the people. As Wu Dunyuan (Puigua) is the chief of the *hong* merchants, Your Majesty's consent is requested to have his third-rank button removed, for a couple of years at least any way, and see whether the *hong* merchants would still continue to connive in opium smuggling.⁷⁹

77. WJD-DG1/11.

78. WJD-DG1/11.

79. WJD-DG1/11.

In addition to Puiqua, sixteen opium dealers in Macao were jailed for their part in the opium trade. In the confession of one of dealers, a Ye Hengshu (葉桓樹), Ruan Yuan found out how opium was smuggled into China, how it was distributed, and how officials were bribed.⁸⁰ Ruan Yuan also impounded cargo and expelled ships that were found to be carrying opium, and destroyed the opium he had confiscated. These actions led the emperor to comment

Although (these actions taken by Ruan Yuan against the Chinese and foreign smugglers) have not put an end to opium smuggling activities, they certainly have managed to stop opium at Lintin.⁸¹

It is worth noting that, despite such vigilance, the quantity of opium exported from India to China did not decline during the period. There is no Chinese record on the amount or value of opium imported, but the traders had kept track of the commodity exported from India. While demand increased, prices rose. A statement of consumption and value of Indian opium in China, including opium which had ‘passed the Company’s sales in India and Malwa opium which had come from the Portuguese port of Demaun’,⁸² from the trading seasons of 1818–9 to 1827–8, shows a sizeable increase in the quantity of opium imported into China after 1822–3. The figures indicate that new methods of smuggling had been devised within two years of the strengthening of the anti-opium measures at Canton.

After 1821 opium smuggling became confined to the islands at the mouth of the Pearl River, with the centre at Lintin Island. Macao and Whampoa were free of opium boats. British sources showed that Ruan Yuan was not involved in opium smuggling. C. Marjoribanks, Esq., a Director of the East India Company, testified before a Parliamentary committee investigating the opium trade that the ‘higher officials at Canton were not involved in the smuggling activities’.⁸³ Officials below the top level, however, were a part of the illegal trade. Official boats patrolling the waters off Canton reported regularly ‘to the Canton authorities that they have swept the seas of all smuggling ships. Yet, the ships remain there just the same.’⁸⁴ As a result, the quantity of opium brought in during 1820–1 and 1821–2 remained steady while prices jumped, indicating insufficient

80. *Diziji* 5:23b. See also Guo Weidong (郭衛東), ‘Ao-men Lishi Shangde Yopian Maoyi Wenti’ (澳門歷史上的鴉片問題), *Review of Culture* (Chinese edition) 40/41 (2000), pp. 99–105.

81. *Diziji* 5:23b. Imperial rescript memorial from Ruan Yuan.

82. *Parliamentary Papers* 30:173. Figures compiled at Canton, November 1828.

83. *Parliamentary Papers* 30:173.

84. *Parliamentary Papers* 30:173.

supply to meet the demand, there was a consistent increase in opium import from then on. 'The value of Indian opium sold in Canton alone, without including other quantities deposited in the other parts of China' increased from 2,951,000 Spanish dollars in 1817–8 to 11,243,496 in 1827–8.⁸⁵

The *Topaze* Crisis, 1821–2

The *Topaze* crisis, lasting from late 1821 into 1822, was the most critical confrontation between the Chinese and the British until the Opium War. This crisis involved all the significant issues of the day, including British naval presence in Chinese waters, jurisdiction over foreigners and the procedure in conducting foreign relations and opium smuggling. It appeared to be especially serious because it came immediately after the *Terranova* crisis. British trade at Canton was stopped for several months. The British factory, fearful that they would be held responsible for the misdeeds of sailors from the frigate the *Topaze*, fled to their ships at Chuenpee on 11 February 1822.⁸⁶ At the end of the crisis Ruan Yuan made a compromise by not insisting on the surrender of the culprit who had left China already in any case, and the British capitulated by abandoning the policy of using 'threat of force as a means of protecting or forwarding British interest in China',⁸⁷ at least for the time being. The Court of Directors of the East India Company 'advised the First Lord of the Admiralty to stop all peace time visits of His Majesty's ships to the China coast unless assistance was urgently requested by the Governor-General of India'.⁸⁸ An order in Council was subsequently issued to this effect in 1823.

By December 1821 rancour from the *Terranova* case had barely died down, especially when foreign traders realized that they had not managed to circumvent the anti-opium laws even by sacrificing *Terranova*. The *Emily*, *Terranova*'s ship, as well as three British ships, all with opium on board, were sent away from their Whampoo anchorage to the island of Lintin, where they remained for three years without discharging or taking on cargo.⁸⁹ During this period, two British warships, HMS *Curlew* and HMS *Topaze*, had sailed into the Pearl Estuary to protect these commercial vessels. Sailors had gone ashore to fetch fresh water from time

85. Appendix to report from the Select Committee on China Trade, VII. *Parliamentary Papers*, Paragraph 5174.

86. *Parliamentary Papers* 30:514.

87. Graham, *The China Station* (1978), p. 17.

88. Graham, *The China Station* (1978), p. 17, n. 28.

89. Morse, *Chronicles* IV, p. 28.

to time with no noteworthy incident. On 14 December 1821,⁹⁰ a group of sailors from the frigate *Topaze* went ashore at Lintin, bringing with them their pet goat onto the cultivated hillside. Behaving true to the species, the goat dug up potatoes, eating a number of them, and damaged the field in the process. A Chinese peasant, Huang Yiming, owner of the field, shouted for his wife, brothers, and neighbours to trounce upon the sailors with sticks and stones and in the fracas two jugs of wine on the side of the hut were broken. When the sailors escaped aboard their ship, they fired a cannon to disperse the persuing and cursing villagers. During the skirmish among the potatoes, a number of British sailors were injured, but none died. The next morning, the sailors, reinforced, went ashore again to revenge their mates. They chopped down the door of the hut of Huang Yiming, and fired a musket, killing him instantly. His son-in-law, also shot, died a few days later from his wounds. Upon being told of the news, Ruan Yuan suspended the Company's trade and required the surrender of the men whom he termed the 'Foreign Murderers'.⁹¹

The Select Committee told Chinese officials to communicate directly with Captain Richardson of the *Topaze* instead of going through the *hong* merchants and the Select Committee.⁹² Had Ruan Yuan done as he was asked, he would have implicitly consented to changing the Canton system. This, he refused to do. He continued to hold to the principle that the supercargo of the British factory be responsible for the conduct of all British nationals in China. While the *hong* merchants, British traders at Canton, and Captain Richardson debated as to which of various possible courses was the best to take, Ruan Yuan held steadfast to his position and ordered the suspension of all British trade. On 3 February 1822, a Chinese official was permitted to board the *Topaze* and was

90. This date was given by Ruan Yuan in his memorial reprinted in *Waijiao Shiliao*, DGI:39. The villagers were killed the next day, 15 December 1821. English-language sources, such as Morse, *Chronicles* IV, p. 28, did not indicate that the incident had taken place on two successive days.

91. Morse, *Chronicles* IV, p. 28.

92. It is interesting that Sir James Brabazon Urmston, 'President of the East India Company's affairs in China' had in his possession a portrait of Ruan Yuan painted by an unknown artist of the China Trade School. This portrait was to be passed to 'My Eldest Surviving Son' with this notation: 'This is a Portrait of a Mandarin of the First Rank [*sic*] who was Viceroy of Canton Province and City [*sic*] in 1821. When I had a very long and arduous discussion with him and his Colleagues — relative to the affair of the Topaze Frigate — It is generally called the Lintin Affair — I was President of the Honorable East India Company's affairs in China at the time — and for my conduct on the occasion, had the honour of knighthood by Patent conferred upon me by His Majesty — King George the Fourth.'

understood to have said that he would make a report of this visit to Governor-General Ruan Yuan. On 8 February, reasoning that everything must be satisfactory because he had not heard from the Chinese officials, Captain Richardson took the *Topaze* to sea.⁹³

It was at this point that the situation became critical. The British factory left Canton within three days. The language used by both sides in their communications was inflexible and threatening. The Committee insisted upon disclaiming responsibilities for the British navy. Two more weeks passed without any sign of resolution. The Committee then explained to Ruan Yuan through the *hong* merchants that Captain Richardson had left for Britain to ‘report to his sovereign’⁹⁴ and that ‘copies of all the papers would be sent to the Court of Directors (of the Company in London)’.⁹⁵ Ruan Yuan noted that since the *Topaze* had already left Chinese waters, it was impossible for the supercargo to surrender the criminals even if he had been willing. Therefore, since a report was being sent to both the sovereign and the Company, he allowed British trade to resume at Canton.⁹⁶ This compromise in order to resolve a difficult conflict reflected Ruan Yuan’s willingness to make the best of a bad situation. For the time being, at least, the principles of the Canton system were preserved. Ruan Yuan did not negotiate with the British except through the intermediary of the *hong* merchants, at least not officially and not on record. Further, it was the Company that had assumed the responsibility to deliver the criminals to Chinese justice, although no such promise had actually been made.⁹⁷ The most significant result of this crisis, of course, was the removal of the British naval presence from the Chinese coast.

Imperial Audience

Meanwhile, the Daoguang Emperor summoned Ruan Yuan to Beijing. A major topic of consultation was how to handle the British at Canton. By that time, two British traders had been in Xinjiang, adding to Chinese suspicion that the British

93. Morse, *Chronicles* IV, p. 29.

94. Morse, *Chronicles* IV, p. 29.

95. Morse, *Chronicles* IV, p. 29.

96. Morse, *Chronicles* IV, p. 29.

97. A brother of the victim, Huang Yiming, sent a petition to the emperor charging that local officials had not brought the criminals to justice. He also claimed that the British sailors had stolen thousands of taels of silver from the house. The emperor referred the case of Ruan Yuan, who decided against the petitioner, asking, ‘How could a peasant who made his living by growing potatoes on Lintin accumulate so much wealth?’ *Waijiao Shiliao*, DG1:39b.

were trying to penetrate into the Chinese Northwest. In view of what the traders had told Chinese authorities in Xinjiang that British rule had been established in Kashmir and Afghanistan, the presence of British naval vessels in Chinese waters took on increasing significance. Therefore, their removal from the Chinese coast, at least until 1840, represented an important diplomatic victory for the Chinese.

While in Beijing, Ruan Yuan had five meetings with the emperor. Even though Ruan Yuan had written with great pride and joy that he was given several embroidered silk purses by the emperor, he never recorded how the principles on foreign policy were established.⁹⁸ Nor did he reveal the role he played. These principles were made public subsequently through a court letter to Ruan Yuan. ‘(1) The principle of compensating for life lost with a life is to remain valid. (2) Foreign nationals, civilian or naval, who violate laws in China or Chinese waters, must submit to Chinese justice. (3) Since foreign naval vessels as well as their personnel are in Chinese waters, ostensibly for the protection of their commercial vessels, their nation’s supercargo is held responsible for the surrender of the culprits to Chinese authorities.’⁹⁹

Ruan Yuan was also directed by the emperor to notify the British supercargo in Canton that, since piracy had been totally eradicated in the waters off Guangdong, there was no need for British ships to have naval escorts. It was at this time the British issued an Order-in-Council restraining British naval vessels from entering Chinese waters.

The Canton Factory Fire, 1822

Right after the *Topaze* crisis, there was the fire of Canton. On the first day of November 1822, the fire began in a cake shop outside the city wall, when the baker was careless with the bits and pieces of brushwood he was using as fuel for melting sugar. Ruan Yuan wrote to the emperor that ‘the streets were narrow and the houses crowded together’.¹⁰⁰ ‘Fanned by strong north winds, despite concerted efforts by soldiers and civilians, the fire could not be contained.’¹⁰¹ It burned through the night and all of the next day, destroying ‘more than 2,423 shops before extending to the foreign factories’.¹⁰² A number of warehouses

98. *Diziji* 5:26.

99. *Waijiao Shiliao* DG I:15a–b.

100. *Waijiao Shiliao* DG I:32. Copy of memorial from Ruan Yuan DG 2/9/20 (1822/11/3).

101. *Waijiao Shiliao* DG I: 22b–3. Copy of court letter to Ruan Yuan DG2/5/25 (1822/7/13).

102. *Waijiao Shiliao* DG I: 22b–3.

belonging to the *hong* merchants were also demolished. Puiqua and Mowqua especially suffered major losses. Sailors from the foreign ships managed to salvage some of the cargo in storage at the factories, but the factory buildings were burned. In the stampede of refugees from the fire, there was looting. Twenty-two people died. Puiqua petitioned Ruan Yuan on behalf of the *hong* merchants and foreign traders for remission of taxes still owed on the goods destroyed. A tax of 140,243 taels due to the Canton Customs by the foreign traders was completely remitted. The *hong* merchants were excused from half of their taxes of 524,156 taels. They did not have to pay anything in 1823. In 1824, however, the other half of the taxes owed had to be paid, with each *hong* merchant's burden proportionate to the damages he had sustained.¹⁰³ Local Chinese shopkeepers who considered themselves well-to-do refused compensation from the government, but small shopkeepers as well as the Tanka boat people accepted money from welfare funds released by the province by Ruan Yuan.¹⁰⁴

With the removal of British warships from Chinese waters, the Canton system appeared to have remained intact. Opium smuggling remained a major problem, but, by 1823, the network of local smugglers was well established. With transshipping of the commodity onto small local crafts outside the Bogue, it was no longer a source of conflict between the foreign traders and Chinese authorities at Canton. Illegal payment in silver to the suppliers meant its exportation, which was again forbidden by imperial decree.¹⁰⁵ By the time Ruan Yuan left Canton in the summer of 1826, the shortage of silver was already becoming evident. His successor became a part of the opium smuggling network as each patrol boat was paid a bribe of 36,000 taels a month to overlook the illicit trade.¹⁰⁶

Concluding Comments

In the summer of 1826 Ruan Yuan was transferred to Kunming as Governor-General of Yunnan and Guizhou. At this time he was over sixty years of age, a distinguished scholar and venerated official who had served three sovereigns. He enjoyed a solid reputation abroad as a fair and honest official as evidenced by the letter Captain Elliot was to write to the British Prime Minister Lord

103. *Waijiao Shiliao* DG I:37. Imperial edict DG2/12/12 (1823/1/23).

104. *Waijiao Shiliao* DG I:37.

105. *Waijiao Shiliao* DG I:22b–23.

106. After Ruan Yuan left Canton, his successor, Li Hongbing, established a system of patrol boats to keep track of the smuggling of opium. One result was that each boat was offered a monthly bribe to ignore the anti-opium laws. Liang, *Guangzhou Shisan Hang kao*, p. 199.

Palmerston at a later date.¹⁰⁷ His family was large, and, despite the loss of a young daughter under tragic circumstances in 1823, by his own assessment he was pleased with his days in Canton. The grain storage was full. Fortifications and new examination facilities were built. Other public buildings and historical sites were restored, and, of course, the Xuehaitang Academy was a reality, bringing high standard of classical learning to South China. The seas were free of foreign war vessels. On the surface, at least, the *hong* merchants and foreign traders in Canton were under control. It was not until more than a dozen years later, when Commissioner Lin applied the same policies adopted by Ruan Yuan, that British commercial interests were able to muster support from their government to challenge the Canton system by force in a conflict which came to be known as the Opium War.

107. *Chinese Repository* XI:406 (August 1842).

Management of Ethnic Minorities and Border Security in Yunnan, 1826–35

After Canton Ruan Yuan was Governor-General of Yunnan and Guizhou in Southwest China. Topographically, the region was ‘rugged with high local relief, and the canyons of western Yunnan (were) characterized by a vertical zonation of climate, soils, and vegetation’.¹ These mountainous provinces boasted a multi-cropped agrarian economy, in addition to copper and salt mining. Therefore, although a ‘relatively primitive frontier region ... by the end of the 18th century, (it) had developed into one of the principal regional economies of Qing China.’² Geographically, the provinces bordered on Guangxi, Hunan, Sichuan, and Tibet, then already a part of the Chinese Empire. Externally, the provinces linked the Chinese Empire with Southeast Asia. Guizhou did not have a frontier, but Yunnan shared a common boundary with the tributary states of Burma (Myanmar) and Vietnam.³ Much of the population on the other side of the border was the same as the heterogeneous tribes of the two provinces. Tax revenue from salt production and copper mining had been in deficit, so necessitated vigilant administration and supervision. Opium was a major problem, for in Yunnan and Guizhou poppies were cultivated and then processed into opium. Secret societies continued to expand, and the Daoguang Emperor looked to provincial officials to identify the groups, to curtail their activities, and hopefully, to eliminate their existence altogether. The assignment of Ruan Yuan to the provinces was in keeping with the court’s policy of sending competent officials to areas of strategic significance.⁴

1. Caroline Blunden and Mark Elvin, *Cultural Atlas of China* (1983), p. 170.

2. James Lee, ‘The Southwest: Yunnan and Guizhou’, in *Nourish the People: The State Civilian Granary System in China, 1650–1850*, edited by Pierre-Étienne Will and R. Bin Wong (1991), p. 431.

3. Today the borders have remained more or less intact. On the other side of Yunnan and Guizhou are Myanmar (Burma), Laos and Vietnam.

4. See Qian Shifu (錢實甫), *Qingdai Zhiguan Nian Biao* (清代職官年表) (1980), volume 2, tables of governor’ general. Holders of this office were mostly Manchu or Mongol officials with military background. Ruan Yuan was the first Chinese to hold this post for more than a few months. After him, the office went to a Manchu.

In 1826, the Daoguang emperor needed a man who had at least a modicum of understanding of economics in addition to administrative and military experience to serve in Yunnan and Guizhou. Ruan Yuan saw as his top priority keeping the tribes under control and to avoid border incidents involving the Southeast Asian states. There was already a large contingent of troops all along the borders of the two provinces, in any case. When he was at Kunming, Ruan Yuan continued to adopt traditional policies when and where he saw fit. As an application of the principle of using barbarians to control barbarians, Ruan Yuan moved the Tibeto-Bruman Lisu (傈僳) people to where they are living today, as a measure of security and control.⁵

Journey from Seaside to the Mountains

After an emotional departure from the scholars and students at the Xuehaitang and the people on the streets Ruan Yuan left Canton in August 1826.⁶ He was sentimental at the start of the journey, particularly because by this time his records showed that he had travelled 10,000 *li* since 1799, when he first became a provincial governor. The Prince Cheng, a friend from his days in the Imperial Study, had come to bid him farewell and had wished him good luck on the outset of ‘a journey of ten thousand *li*’.⁷ Ruan Yuan went with his family as far as Zhaoqing (肇慶). From there he sent the women and the young grandchildren to the mountains to stay until the Mid-Autumn Festival (that year fell on 16 September) in order to escape having to travel in the intense summer heat, and took off for his new post. The journey by water through Guangxi, Hunan, and Sichuan took more than two months. At one point the water level was so low he almost had to abandon the boat to travel on land, but was saved by a sudden storm. When the rains swelled the river again, the journey by water resumed. Travelling by boat

5. Anthropological studies do not normally give any information on history of the migration of the Lisu people. In a publication by the Nationalities Research Institute of Yunnan (Yunnan Minzu Yanjiu Suo 雲南民族研究所) in 1982, there is a reference: ‘The name of the Lisu has been known since the Tang dynasty.’ Their original home was south of the Liang Mountains, until the Qing dynasty when the government was oppressive. They then were *forcibly moved* (italics mine) to where they are now, in the Nu River valley.’ *Minzu yanjiu wenji* (民族研究文集) [Collected essays on nationalities] published by the Yunnan Nationalities Publications, Foreword dated 1982, p. 120. The term ‘forcibly moved’ was not defined.

6. *Diziji* 6: 12b. Ruan Yuan made arrangements to ensure future financial support for the academy, including the construction and provisioning of a library.

7. *Diziji* 1: 13b. ‘That was the start of my 10,000 *li* journey’, Ruan Yuan recalled his sons. *Diziji* 6:13.

was a less arduous way to move about for Ruan Yuan. All the time, his feet and legs, swollen and painful, were causing him great distress.

Ruan Yuan remained in good humour when he marvelled at the waterfalls and the gorges of the Upper Yangzi.⁸ He entered the jurisdiction of the two provinces by leaving the boat at Zhenyuan Fu (鎮遠府) in Guizhou on 23 September 1826 when he took possession of the seal of office and received officials who briefed him on broader affairs, as well as copper and salt production. He arrived at Kunming (昆明) on 18 October. For Ruan Yuan, the two and half months' journey was leisurely and in a sense pleasurable. He was able to visit several notable sites. On the ninth day of the ninth month, he was able to follow the tradition of Chongyang (重陽) and climbed to higher grounds.

Meanwhile, Ruan Fu escorted his mother (Liu Wenru) and children to join Ruan Yuan at Kunming,⁹ while Ruan Konghou escorted his mother (Kong Luhua) and children back to Yangzhou where they stayed until 1832.

Kunming

Unlike the maritime commercial provinces of Zhejiang and Guangdong where Ruan Yuan had served previously, Yunnan did not have a cosmopolitan centre. There were few scholars with similar interests to while away the time. Nor was there a coterie of wealthy merchants with a sophisticated lifestyle, accustomed to his practice in enlisting their support for education and scholarship. His one noted achievement in scholarship was the compilation of the draft comprehensive gazetteer of Yunnan, and it did not appear that he had entered into this venture whole-heartedly.¹⁰ It was not a happy period for him. Although he was called to the capital twice during his tenure to confer with the Daoguang Emperor, and was Chief Examiner of the Metropolitan Examination in 1833, his stay in Yunnan and Guizhou was filled with personal sadness. It must be noted here that by the time Ruan Yuan arrived at Yunnan, he was already more than sixty years of age,

8. *Dijizi* 6: 13.

9. Presumably the women and children could take a more direct route because they did not need to follow Ruan Yuan who had to make various stops as the new governor-general in the provinces.

10. There was no dearth of local histories for Yunnan. Even during the Qing dynasty, the strategic importance of the province led to the compilation of gazetteers under the aegis of various governors-general. Ruan Yuan had appointed a native of the province, Wang Song (王崧), metropolitan graduate of the class of 1799, as editor-in-chief. The work was not complete when Ruan Yuan left Kunming.

and when he left in 1835, he was seventy-three. He was also suffering from swollen legs and feet, a painful condition diagnosed as *peripheral endema* today. ‘Within one year of his arrival, his right foot recovered totally, but the left foot had not shown much improvement.’¹¹ Still, he made worthwhile contributions as a provincial official and in general enjoyed his time in the southwest, leaving a large number of poems in celebration of the scenery of the mountains and highlands.

The capital of the provinces, Yunnan Fu, including the district city of Kunming, was interesting as its landscape, flora and fauna, historical and ethnic heritage were different from what Ruan Yuan had known before. The city was located almost on the Tropic of Cancer, in the centre of a plateau surrounded by high mountains, truly a land of eternal spring. Average temperature in July was around 20 degrees Celsius. The soil was rich, but, the earth was unstable because geologically there were many faults. For instance, Ruan Yuan reported a major earthquake that took place in 1833, killing and injuring several thousand residents, and destroying tens of thousand homes.¹² Flowers of exciting colours were everywhere, ‘including the mountainsides and wilderness areas, there (was) a virtual sea of beautiful flowers’.¹³ Camellias and begonias bloomed all year round. The gentle climate was certainly a welcome relief after almost a decade in hot and humid Guangdong. Ruan Yuan was especially delighted to discover, right there in the garden at the governor-general’s residence, several scores of ancient pines and plums, some of which dating back to the Tang dynasty.

The residence of the governor-general included two gardens. The eastern garden, named ‘Garden of Happy Suitability’ (Yi Yuan 宜園), pleased him. His lifestyle was more leisurely; there was even sufficient time for him to pay attention to his own vegetable garden.

11. *Diziji* 6:22b. This diagnosis is given by Professor Jean Wu (specializing in geriatric medicine) and Dr Nancy Leung (specializing in liver diseases), based on my description of Ruan Yuan’s various symptoms at the age of 72. The conditions, including swollen lower limbs, could be caused by liver or venal problems, but they think it unlikely that he suffered from beriberi due to lack of vitamin B, because, although he ate polished rice, Ruan Yuan had access to fresh meat, legume and green vegetables, and fruit.

12. JJJLF-DG 066172. See also *Diziji* 7: 15a–b.

13. Blunden and Elvin, p. 170. See also ‘Letter from Yunnan – Isolation at the Centre of the World’ from Andrea Quong (dated 23 October 1997). Ms Quong was an associate of a team which had gone to Yunnan near Mynmar to collect data on plants and flowers in Yunnan. ‘The region is home to thousands of plant species found nowhere else in the world, many with unique medicinal properties.’

Picking vegetables in my own garden, I became more appreciative of poems by an ancient poet. Reading the poem is like biting the roots off the vegetable plant; the fragrance permeates the soul. Vegetable gardens are a common sight in Yunnan. Every other home seems to boast its own garden patch. Each time I see a household servant bent over the vegetables, I develop an urge to work as a gardener. At long last, I gave in to this urge, and bent from my waist to pick a basketful of green vegetables the other day. I called the grandchildren to hurry to supper, so that they, too, could share the freshness of what I had plucked from the earth.¹⁴

His poems praising the scenery and serenity of this remote province were carved into rocky cliffs at various sites in the provinces. Some still remain. One such poem, seen at the Black Dragon Pool, ten miles or seventeen kilometres) outside Kunming in 1978 included these lines (Heilong Tan 黑龍潭):

Blossoms on hundred-year old plum trees,
Reflect in a lake a thousand *chi* deep.
Spring breezes always arrive first
In colourful Yunnan.¹⁵

National Minorities during the Qing

Here in the mountainous provinces the population was not entirely Han Chinese, Ruan Yuan found himself faced with a new set of experiences. For, in the highlands of Yunnan and Guizhou, there was a concentration of some of the minority nationalities which had not become absorbed into the Chinese polity and culture even though they had been exposed to them since ancient times. Today, at the start of the twenty-first century, the provinces still boast more than two hundred minority nationalities.¹⁶ A great deal of information on the minorities, with illustrations, was included in the *Draft Comprehensive Gazetteer of Yunnan*, begun in 1826 under Ruan Yuan's aegis and finished after he left the post in 1835.

14. The poem is cited in full in Fujitsu Chikashi in 'Gen Undai to Richo no Kingendo', *Shen-en* 6: 2:1–14 (Tokyo 1942), p. 13.

15. I am grateful to Gennie Lee for taking the trouble to copy down these lines for me. This lakeside resort also boasted a Ming dynasty Daoist shrine, honouring one of the Eight Immortals, Lue Dongping (呂洞賓).

16. Forty-five million, or 8.5 percent, of China's 1.2 billion population in 1999 were non-Han. About half of these non-Han people live in the southwest, or, 36.8 percent of the residents in southwest China are non-Han. Colin Mackerras, *China's Minorities: Integration and Modernization in the Twentieth Century* (1999), pp. 240–2. (Chinese census estimates in November 2005 set total population to be 1.306 billion, with 8.1 percent non-Han.)

There were several major linguistic groups among the minority peoples in the provinces, including the Mon-Khmer (Miao 苗 and Yao 傜), the Shan (or Tai 傣), and Tibeto-Burman (Tibetan, Naxi 納西, Lisu). Politically and socially, their organization was tribal. A number of these tribes, such as the Miao, had been in China proper since pre-historical times, but not all of them had become absorbed into the mainstream Chinese culture.¹⁷ Originally settled in Central China between the Yellow and the Yangzi Rivers, the tribes which had not become assimilated gradually moved into the southwestern provinces of Western Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou where they scattered into the higher areas. Tribal government under the chieftain, *tusi* (土司), was maintained.¹⁸ Other tribes, of Tibeto-Burman origin and various degrees of cultural development, lived along the borders of Yunnan, Vietnam, and Burma.

Ruan Yuan's tenure saw a period of relative tranquillity in Yunnan. The last notable ethnic minority disturbance had taken place six years before his arrival, and the more serious revolts after the Opium War were yet to come. Border incidents involving the minority populace were also few in number, the two most notable were those involving the Diao (刁) and Nong (農) tribal chieftains. These incidents, however, were of strategic significance since relations with the tributary states of Burma, Laos, and Vietnam were affected. Other cases involved domestic squabbles within the tribes, where interference from government authority was necessary. Ruan Yuan noted how some of the issues were handled in *Diziji*, and copies of his communications with the Daoguang Emperor are extant in the Grand Council documents. During his tenure, Ruan Yuan went personally to inspect troops several times, as close as 130 *li* to the Burmese border while he resolved matters on salt and copper.¹⁹

Qing Minorities Policy

Qing policy on ethnic minorities in the southwest was established during the Yongzhen reign (1723–35). E'ertai (鄂爾泰 1680–1745), Governor of Yunnan and concurrently Governor-General of Yunnan and Guizhou (1726–32), subdued the tribes throughout the region.²⁰ This policy was the *gaitu guiliu* (改土歸流),

17. Xiao Yishan, *Qingdai Tongshi* I, pp. 871–2.

18. Xiao, *Qingdai Tongshi* I, p. 871.

19. *Diziji* 6:13. Ruan Fu, his mother, and the children arrived at Kunming while Ruan Yuan was on this journey, hence missed his birthday celebrations that year.

20. Provincial boundaries as well as administrative jurisdictions were altered at that time. For instance, when tribal chieftains in Sichuan surrendered to E'ertai in 1727, that area, inhabited by

incorporating the nationalities into the Chinese provincial administration but permitting them a certain measure of autonomy under their hereditary chieftains. Certain areas in the provinces were reserved for members of the ethnic minorities, but, as time progressed, boundaries became difficult to delineate.

Ruan Yuan and Miao Lands

After Ruan Yuan arrived at Kunming, he investigated the extent of Chinese occupation of land theoretically reserved for the Miao tribesmen. As Chinese population moved into these areas, conflicts developed between the Chinese and the Miao. At the same time, despite official prohibition of marriages between the Miao and the Chinese, the two ethnic groups continued to mix, resulting in further Chinese assumption of lands reserved for the Miao.²¹ Throughout the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns there had been Miao rebellions.²²

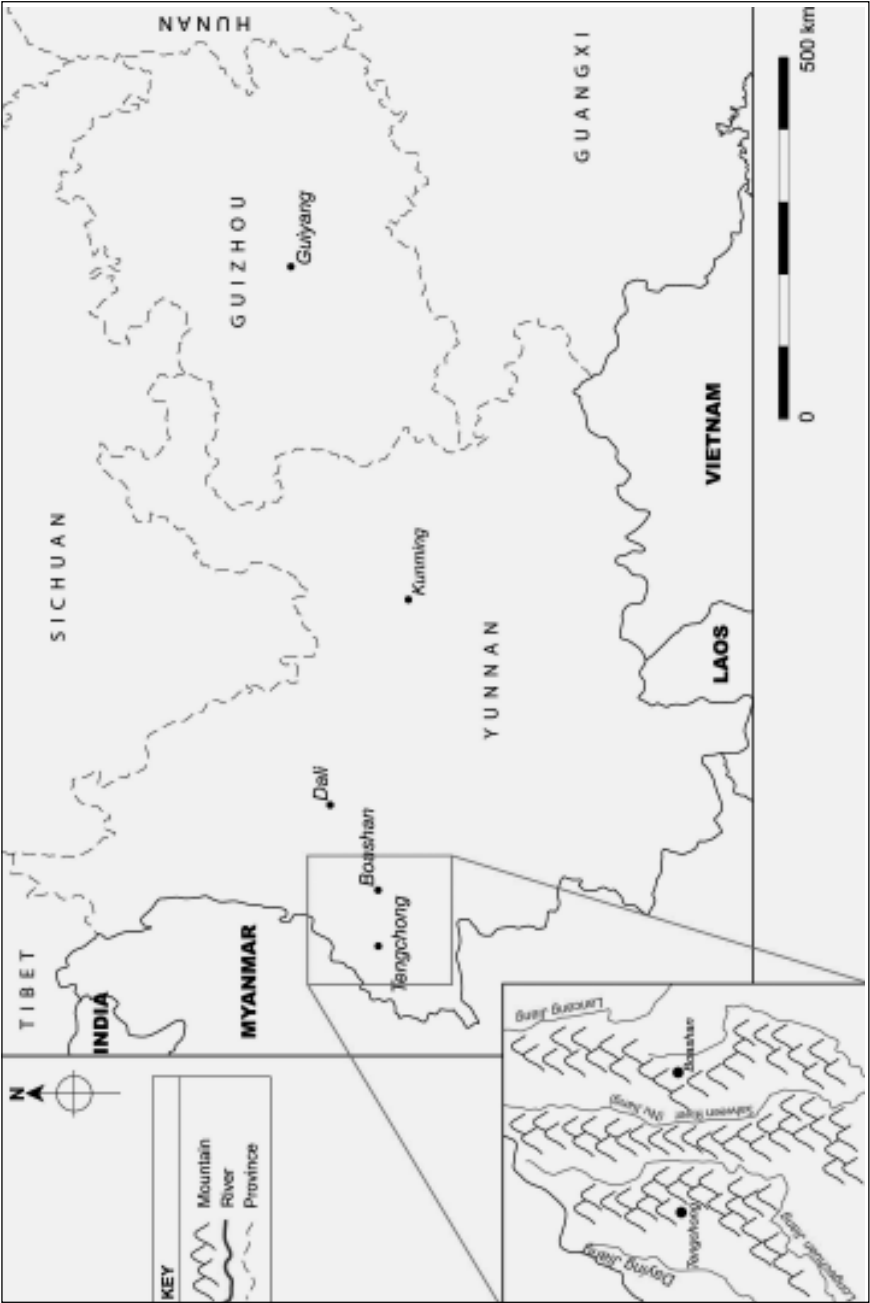
A census was taken in the two provinces during the early Daoguang reign to determine exactly how many Chinese households were living on land designated as Miao Reserve. Unfortunately, only the records of 1827 for Guizhou were available to this research. In obtaining these figures, the *baojia* registers were brought up to date. The census showed a total of 71,495 Chinese households residing in areas designated as Miao Reserves in Guizhou, engaging in farming, animal husbandry, trade, crafts and domestic servitude.²³ Ruan Yuan found many of these Chinese to be refugees from the floods in Hubei. Whatever disputes they had with the Miao tribesmen were under control by official troops stationed

these tribes, was transferred to the jurisdiction of Yunnan. In 1725 E'ertai was appointed Governor-General of Yunnan and Guizhou. After successful implementation of the *gaitu guiliu* programme in 1728 as he pacified the tribes in Guangxi, where there was a large number of ethnic tribes, was placed under his jurisdiction as well. Fang Chao-ying, biography of O'er-tai, Hummel, pp. 601–3. See also *Qingdai Zhiguan Nianbiao* [Tables of offices and officials of the Qing dynasty], compiled by Qian Shipu (1980), II: 1390–5.

21. Edict issued in 1727 by Fu Min (福敏), Governor-General of Hunan. 'Chinese men already married to Miao women are exempt from this edict. Chinese who are betrothed but not yet married to Miao women must break their engagements. Violators will be punished severely. All soldiers married to Miao women are to be transferred away from their wives', in Wang Wenshao, *Xu Yunnan Tongzhi gao* (續雲南通志稿) (Draft Comprehensive Gazetteer of Yunnan, Supplement) (Taipei reprint), p. 104.

22. Ma Shaoqiao (馬少橋), *Qingdai Miaomin Qiyi* (清代苗民起義) [Miao uprisings during the Qing dynasty], Wuhan: People's Publishing, 1956, p. 34.

23. JJLF-DG 056875 (DG7/9/18 [1827/11/6]), copy of memorial from Songpu (嵩浦), Governor of Guizhou.



Map 7.1 Yunnan and Guizhou: Showing deployment of Lisu to prevent border clashes among tribes, 1826–35

near the problem areas.²⁴ Ensuing correspondence between the emperor and officials in the provinces made it clear that private migration from one province to another was not encouraged, that the Miao tribes were not free to dispose of their land, that the local populace must be kept under strict control at all times.²⁵

Cross-the-Border Minorities

The tribes living inside the Chinese border and those who lived outside raided each other's settlements periodically, straining relationship between the Chinese Empire and the tributary states of Vietnam and Burma. Although Ruan Yuan saw as his top priority the development of a policy to safeguard the borders and internal peace between the Chinese and the tribes, he did not want to strengthen regular troops along the border so as not to alarm the tributary states.²⁶ Yet, a way had to be found to protect the tribes living under the protection of the Chinese Empire. Ruan Yuan created a buffer zone by placing in it three hundred families from the Tibeto-Burman tribal people whom he called the Luo-luo (羅羅).²⁷ This was the Lisu, a semi-agrarian people with language 'closely connected to that of the Lo-lo [*sic*], and they are no doubt a branch of this widely spread race'.²⁸

Ruan Yuan was noted for his preservation of security and control during his long government career. As governor or governor-general in several strategic coastal and interior provinces from 1799 to 1825, he had organized the *baojia* and *tuanlian* strategy in suppressing coastal piracy in Zhejiang, in investigating secret society activities in Jiangxi, and in managing trade and relations with the foreigners in Canton. He was to handle the issues involving minority nationalities in Yunnan as exercises in security and control as well. It must be noted here that Ruan Yuan interfered in minority affairs only when the situations were explosive and when they affected relations with the tributary states. Otherwise, he maintained the *gaitu guiliu* policy.

24. Memorial from Ruan Yuan, Governor-General of Yunnan and Guizhou, dated DG2/2/22 (1822/3/15), reprinted in *Diziji* 6:16–7.

25. Joint memorials from Ruan Yuan, and Yutai, Governor of Guizhou, dated DG14 (1834), reprinted in Huang Qing zou-yi (皇清奏議), compiled by Qinchuan Jushi (琴川居士), (Taipei 1967), pp. 333–7.

26. *Diziji* 6:16–7.

27. *Diziji* 6:16–7. Also 7:5b–6. This strategy was noted by A. Vissière in his biography of Ruan Yuan in *T'oung Pao* (Leiden) 1904, pp. 587–9.

28. H. R. Davies, *Yun-nan, the Link Between India and the Yangtze* (1909) (Taipei reprint 1970), pp. 124, 391.

Deployment of the Lisu Nationality

In 1827, Ruan Yuan deployed three hundred households of Lisu archers from Baoshan (保山) to Tengyue (騰越), across mountain ranges and the Nujiang (Salween River 怒江), in order to keep marauding tribesmen from raiding settlements on the Burma-Yunnan border. Using regular troops to battle the minority populace in territories that could be considered to lie outside Chinese jurisdiction could lead to military incidents involving tributary relations. The Lisu archers were skilled in crossbow with poisoned darts. Ruan Yuan saw a demonstration of their skills personally, and found that the Lisu archers had more accurate aim than the regular troop's, but the distance covered by their darts was not so far.²⁹ They were given land and seeds to start an agrarian economy. (Today, the Lisu still cultivate the same crops, including maize, barley, and a variety of mushrooms.) The Lisu maintained small separate households after marriage, hence the three hundred original Lisu households had increased to one thousand heads by 1849, as Ruan Fu noted in the *Diziji*.³⁰ This measure apparently worked as the tribe which created the original problem surrendered. Ruan Yuan led a troop of regular force to accept this surrender at Tengyue.³¹

The initial cost for settling the Lisu along the border in Tengyue was 10,000 taels, half of what the province would have to spend to keep official troops in the same area.³² This amount was to be paid from the salt fund as it had been earlier during the Yongzheng era.³³

The Diao Case and Sino-Vietnam Border Relations

Measures were taken to resolve disputes within tribes to prevent them from developing into conflicts that would involve the Chinese Empire and the tributary states. The Diao family had been hereditary chieftains of a tribe in an area in Yunnan that had been organized into the prefecture of Pu'er (普洱) in 1729. In 1834, a struggle for power within the tribe took place. The young chieftain, Diao

29. *Diziji* 6:16b–17.

30. *Diziji* 6:17. The Lisu maintained small separate households after marriage, hence the three hundred original Lisu households had increased to two thousand by 1849, as Ruan Fu noted in the *Diziji* 6:7. Whether this dramatic increase was due to further influx or was it the result of an impressive birth rate, the records do not say. Apparently there was another injection of 370 households during the interim.

31. *Diziji* 6:17.

32. *Diziji* 6:18b.

33. *Diziji* 6:18b.

Shengwu (刁繩武), attacked his uncle, Diao Taikang (刁太康), who had served as regent since the former was two months old, but who had retired when his nephew reached majority. Shengwu accused his uncle of trying to usurp power as chieftain. Ruan Yuan sided with the uncle, who claimed that ‘had I wanted to be chieftain, I could have taken over when my nephew was an infant. Why should I have bothered to wait until now?’³⁴ Shengwu was removed from his position by imperial decree. Taikang’s son was made chieftain in his place.

Perhaps it was Shengwu’s policies in allowing himself to be used as a pawn in Burmese-Siamese relations that caused his downfall. Burma and Siam were not on good terms at that time. A few years before, when Ruan Yuan was still in Canton, Shengwu had become friendly with a tribe that had allied itself with Siam. He permitted himself to be persuaded into going to Burma, where he was held as a hostage for several years. His uncle, then already retired, worked with the governor-general of the two provinces at that time, Changling (1758–1838), to have him returned. Although Ruan Yuan’s records are silent on this issue, it can safely be surmised that since that time the uncle had kept a closer watch over tribal affairs, resulting in armed confrontation in 1834. Consequently, Chinese authorities supported the uncle lest Shengwu’s actions led him, and the Qing Empire, into conflict between Burma and Siam.

The Nong Case and Sino-Vietnamese Relations

Another case involved relations between China and Vietnam during Ruan Yuan’s tenure. The Vietnamese Nguyen rulers with whom the Qing court had had a sensitive relationship since the beginning of the Jiaqing reign,³⁵ were stirring up trouble again. The case took place as Ruan Yuan was about to leave Kunming for Beijing in 1835. It involved a tribal chieftain who was a vassal to the Vietnamese ruler. The chieftain, Nong Wenyun (農文雲), led a rebellion on and off for several years against the ruler. Nong’s activities in 1833–5, along the Sino-Vietnamese border, involved the Chinese Empire because of his lack of success. When official Vietnamese forces chased the rebel, he escaped into Chinese territory, in Yunnan. Ruan Yuan had to handle possible presence of Vietnamese troops across the Sino-Vietnamese border very, very carefully. It was fortunate, therefore, when Nong found himself in a cave, from which there was no way out. He committed suicide.³⁶ Still, there was much surveillance work, and the cost was 20,000 taels. At least another incident between the Chinese Empire and Vietnam was avoided.

34. *Diziji* 6:16b–23b.

35. See Chapter 4.

36. *Diziji* 7: 24b–27b.

Salt and Copper

Ruan Yuan's work on reforming the salt administration has been noted in official records of that time.³⁷ It was also noted in the *Diziji*.³⁸ As soon as Ruan Yuan arrived at Kunming, he investigated all salt mines in the provinces while ostensibly visiting the troops. He found several mines to be operating illegally, without licence and without paying taxes to the state. Originally the illegal mines had been licensed to the minority tribes, then they were taken over by Chinese individuals as time passed. By closing those illegal mines, only officially licensed mines were permitted to produce and sell salt.

Meanwhile, salt was also being smuggled into the provinces from Burma, causing additional loss in revenue.³⁹ By further enforcing collection measures of the salt tax, it became impossible for lower level officials to cheat. He also collected back taxes that had been owed. In 1826 alone, the salt tax fund was increased by 261,000 taels, including back tax of 'more than several tens of thousands' (*ji ji wan liang* 幾及萬兩).⁴⁰ The money went towards provincial expenses, including support for the Lisu programme at its outset. Subsequently, the Lisu settlement programme was paid out of the *yanglian* funds of the province. By 1831, the programme was well on its way, but the Lisu settlers still need subsidy as their produce was not sufficient for their needs. Following practice of Ruan Yuan in paying for programmes not in the provincial budget, he continued to draw money from the *yanglian* fund.⁴¹

Opium and Secret Society Activities

Opium continued to be a problem for the empire throughout the 1820s and 1830s. From Yunnan and Guizhou, especially Yunnan, there was an additional concern, because the tribes cultivated opium poppies as a cash crop. As Ruan Yuan travelled to inspect troops, he could see the situation for himself. He found an increasing number of troops become addicted to opium smoking, and the visibly larger fields of poppies. After harvest, the poppies were processed into opium. His anti-opium stand was further hardened. When the Daoguang Emperor

37. *Shilu* DG 121: 1b–14. See also JJLF-DG 068008 and 068009.

38. *Diziji* 6:14b–15b.

39. Zhang Xiaoye (張小也), *Qingdai siyan wenti yanjiu* (清代私鹽問題研究) [A study on unlicensed salt of the Qing era] (2001), pp. 109–10.

40. *Diziji* 6:15b.

41. *Diziji* 7:5b–6.

issued a general edict commanding individual provincial officials to report on the opium situation under their jurisdiction, he put the provincial officials under warning that they were responsible for activities related to opium.

Opium continues to be grown in provinces of Fujian, Guangdong, and Yunnan. Putting an end to opium cultivation, selling, and smoking is the responsibilities of the governor-general and governor in each province.⁴²

Ruan Yuan's response was, in fact, a series of memorials he sent to the emperor, some singly, others jointly with Yilibu.⁴³ Each of the memorials stated in detail how civilian and military personnel handled the illegal activities involved in the cultivation and sale of opium.⁴⁴ Twice a year, during planting and harvesting time, officials inspected the areas where there were suspicious activities and destroyed the crops. In the attachment to the memorial, twenty-four cases involving the trials of opium offenders in 1832 were listed.⁴⁵ These cases included twelve of planting poppies and processing opium, one case when the criminal died in jail from illness, seven for selling opium, and the rest for smoking opium. Punishments include one hundred strokes with the cane, jail or exile for from two months to three years, while the criminals were to wear one or two canques in the duration.

New Granaries

The climate of Yunnan was pleasant, but not arid. The annual average rainfall was, and has remained today, 1,200 to 2,300 millimetres, with 60 percent falling from June to August.⁴⁶ Therefore, care had to be taken to protect stored grain, including the positioning of granaries. The harvest of 1828 was good. Ruan Yuan was making plans to store sufficient grain to feed the troops and hopefully with enough left over to supply the populace as well should such a need arose. He

42. Court letter dated DG10/6/29 (1830/8/18), reprinted in *Yunnan Tongzhi Gao, juan shou* (卷首), pp. 18–9.

43. Yilibu was one of the imperial commissioners to negotiate with the British after the Opium War. Apparently the emperor was aware of the advice Ruan Yuan sent and consulted the Governor-General at Canton, who replied that Ruan Yuan's thinking was out of date. *Diziji* 8:5–6b.

44. JJLU-DG 066648 Grand Council copy of memorial from Ruan Yuan and Yilibu, DG12/12/7 (1833/1/27). The emperor's rescript was dated DG13/1/9 (1833/2/28).

45. GZD DG 062372 – Enclosure to JJLF DG 066648.

46. http://www.sinohost.com/yunnan_travel/banna/viewimages/rain_forest.html (visited on 28 April 2005).

found, however, that the existing granaries were located on the banks of a large lake, just outside Kunming, and was so moist as to render it useless.

It rained heavily during the summer and autumn, so the granary storage areas were wet. The variety of rice produced in Yunnan was not strong to begin with, that in the present storage absorbed so much moisture that the rice became mildewed and spoiled. Right now, should there be an urgent need, there is not enough rice to feed the people even for one day.⁴⁷

Ruan Yuan recalled that even in hot and humid Guangdong, he was able to find a dry spot to locate the granaries. He ordered, therefore, in conjunction with the Governor of Yunnan, Yilibu, to have constructed a granary of fifty rooms to the west of the city, where the elevation was high and the breezes blew regularly. He made plans to store rice and two other varieties of grain, and was happy to visualize 100,000 *shi* of rice in storage after the harvest.⁴⁸

Tribute Missions

There were enjoyable moments. The arrival of the Vietnamese tribute mission in 1831 brought four elephants, and the Burmese in 1833 brought four more. The elephants amused Ruan Yuan and his grandchildren greatly. The Burmese tribute also brought a memorial to the throne written in gold, three statues of the Buddha of Longevity, two pairs of ivory tusks, nine bolts of red, green, and yellow woollen cloth, thirty bolts of cotton cloth, ten bolts of towelling, ten rugs, 10,000 sheets of gold, 10,000 sheets of silver, one pair of red ruby bracelets, one pair of blue sapphires, two pieces of jade, ten taels of garu-wood (*chen xiang*), two hundred taels of sandalwood, ten bottles of attar and ten of perfume, thirty-one pairs of compacts (*mian he* 緬盒), and fifteen peacock screens.⁴⁹ The tribute missions entered the Chinese Empire through Yunnan, were dispatched to Beijing with escorts provided by Ruan Yuan, and departed from China by the same route.

Imperial Audiences

During his tenure in Yunnan and Guizhou Ruan Yuan went to Beijing twice. In 1829 he had reached sixty-five *sui*, therefore was accorded the privilege of being allowed to ride on horseback inside the Forbidden City. As soon as the Daoguang

47. *Diziji* 6: 20–21.

48. *Diziji* 6: 21.

49. *Yunnan Tongzhi Gao* (1835) 189:26b–27.

Emperor saw the condition of Ruan Yuan's feet he directed that he be carried on a small sedan chair.⁵⁰ The emperor and official discussed the issues of increasing copper production as a policy to compensate for its loss in value in relationship with silver, the training of soldiers for border defence and internal security, the appropriation of land and money to establish more buffer zones with the Luo-luo tribesmen.⁵¹ The second time Ruan Yuan went to Beijing was in 1833. The emperor had sent for him ostensibly to congratulate him on reaching seventy *sui*. He stayed on to supervise the metropolitan examination.

Personal Losses

Personally, these were tragic years for Ruan Yuan. Physically he continued to suffer. A series of deaths struck his family. Tang Jingyun, the youngest of his concubines, died in March of 1832 at the age of forty-four. Kong Luhua, his wife, who had arrived from Yangzhou only one week before he left for Beijing in January 1833, and who had not at all liked Ruan Yuan's departure so soon after her own and the grandchildren's arrival, died of cholera at the age of fifty-six on 17 February 1833. Ruan Changsheng, his adopted son to whom he had been devoted for forty years, took the wrong medicine and died on May 1833 at Baoding Fu, where he was an official. News of the two deaths reached Ruan Yuan as he was finishing the examination papers in early June. When he left Beijing he was so 'physically and spiritually broken'⁵² that his son Ruan Hu and Hu's wife insisted on accompanying him on this long journey from Beijing to Kunming. They stopped at Baoding Fu to arrange for the transportation of Ruan Changsheng's family and his remains back to Yangzhou.

Concluding Comments

The remainder of Ruan Yuan's stay in Yunnan was marked by minor but numerous tribal rebellions and border incidents. The problems he had to cope with were becoming frustrating and tedious for him. When one rebellion was suppressed; another would break out. None of them was major, but took time and energy that the old man no longer seemed to have. He was still reporting on the Nong case as he left for Beijing.

50. *Diziji* 6:23.

51. *Diziji* 6:23.

52. *Diziji* 7:14b.

These were his declining years. He had written a poem on his birthday in 1826, recalling a poem written by the renowned Tang poet, Bo Ju Yi, *hao* (號) Yaotian (樂天), whose birthday fell on the same day as Ruan Yuan's. Thus, Ruan Yuan had always felt an affinity for this Tang poet on their mutual birthday.

When I was forty, I wrote poetry in the tradition of Bo Yaotian.
 He was seventy minus four that day (when Bo wrote the particular poem referred here).
 Now I have reached that age – I have become what he was.
 For ten years, I have been depending on glasses to read.
 Though I have few white hairs, my beard is gray.
 I can still hear clearly, only more slowly,
 And, oh, how people have taken to whisper!
 I can boast of thirty teeth still, but the long years in Guangdong have left my feet afflicted.
 The cool weather in Yunnan is easing the pain in my left foot, but the right one is still far
 from well.⁵³

In 1835, when he was seventy-two *sui*, Ruan Yuan was recalled to Beijing, thus ending his services in the provinces that had lasted more than thirty years. He had been made a grand secretary in 1832. Now he was to hold the title concurrently as President of the Board of War.

53. *YJSJ*, supplement.

8

Ruan Yuan's Social Welfare Programmes

Whereas this research on Ruan Yuan's government work heretofore has concentrated on the area of security and control, it was his social welfare programmes in Zhejiang that showed his humanitarian concerns both as an official and as a private individual. As in his handling of other issues, he managed the social welfare aspects of his provincial responsibilities in accordance with law and tradition, but offered innovations wherever opportunities arose. In maintaining institutions of care and in establishing gruel kitchens¹ in time of need, Ruan Yuan was carrying out a traditional responsibility of the Confucian state, but with humanitarian touches of his own.

Philosophical Background for Welfare

Kung-ch'uan Hsiao, in *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, quoted Mencius in saying that if the people do not have a constant livelihood they cannot have constant minds (Mencius, I/i/7/20).² Hsiao went on to an even higher authority by citing Confucius: 'When the people do not have enough, the commands will not be respected. When the people suffer hardship and calamity, the commands cannot be implemented.'³ It became clear, therefore,

Confucius understood that ensuring the people's livelihood constitutes one of the essential elements of government. Plenty or deficiency can be the issue determining whether government will be stable or shaky.⁴

1. Chinese version of soup kitchens. Gruel (*zhou* 粥) is made of rice and water. For cooking ordinary rice (by boiling instead of steaming) the ratio is one and half cups of water to one cup of raw rice. For gruel the ratio is more than three cups of water to one cup of raw rice.

2. Mencius, as cited in Kung-chuan Hsiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, translated by F. W. Mote, I (1979), p. 355.

3. Confucius, as cited in Hsiao, *Political Thought*, p. 356.

4. Hsiao, *Political Thought*, p. 356.

Therefore, philosophically as well as for political ends, the Chinese rulers throughout the ages, including those of the Qing, conducted welfare programmes to meet the needs of the people. For Ruan Yuan personally, the welfare programmes were important. Social welfare was an integral part of his responsibility as a provincial official; his often impoverished childhood had given him an understanding of the meaning of ‘want’. Perhaps these were the reasons he devised and ensured the implementation of humanitarian programmes personally despite a busy schedule.

Definition of Social Welfare

For this study, social welfare is defined as the assumption by the state the responsibility for the care of disadvantaged groups in society, especially abandoned and orphaned children, the handicapped, the sick, the elderly and those with no means to care for themselves. Each locality had a quota of people who could not support themselves and who received welfare relief on a regular basis.⁵ A sector in each community, defined by the state as indigent (*pinmin* 貧民), depended on public sustenance. It was to this sector Ruan Yuan’s attention was directed in 1799 when he arrived at Hangzhou as Governor of Zhejiang. In Qing China, eligibility for welfare was also determined by whether the beneficiary’s name appeared on the *baojia* register of the locality.⁶

Welfare Funding

It must be reiterated here that for Ruan Yuan, welfare funding was not to be drawn from the already overburdening tax revenue. In addition to soliciting contributions for military and naval expenditure, such as the construction of ships and manufacture of cannons, Ruan Yuan had to find money to carry out the social welfare programmes. Zhejiang was a wealthy province, with prosperous rice, salt, silk and tea merchants ready to respond to the governor’s call to loosen their purses. There was also a large number of young men whose families were able to purchase opportunities for them through *juanna* (捐納), the office purchase system, the granting of gentry status of Student by Purchase (*fujian sheng* 附監生) or Elegant Scholar (*junxiu* 俊秀). In fact, Ruan Yuan did well indeed in collecting a large sum of money during his first term as Governor of Zhejiang

5. T’ung-tsu Ch’ü, *Local Government in China under the Ch’ing* (1962, 1988 edition), p. 308.

6. *Da Qing Shicao Shengxun* (大清十朝聖訓), Jiaqing reign (嘉慶朝), 52:8.

by adopting this method of funding, collecting 638,120 taels from sale of these titles to 6,380 individuals.⁷ The memorials found in the Qing Archives on this topic showed how Ruan reported the receipt and expenditure for the period between March/April 1800 (JQ 5/3) and October/November 1801 (JQ 6/9).⁸ Although he used a part of the money to pay for flood relief, not all the money collected was retained in the province.

Table 8.1 Report of receipt and expenditure of funding, 1880–1

Received from 'Office Purchase' System (taels)	Expenditure Disturbed (taels)	
638,120	Flood Relief	186,500
	To Yunnan for military provisions	20,672
	To Sichuan for military provisions	24,000
	To Shanxi for expenses (unspecific)	200,000
	To Board of Revenue	100,000
	Total	531,172

One hundred six thousand nine hundred and forty-eight taels remained in the provincial treasury. Board of Revenue regulations required that funds be sent in units of 100,000 taels at a time to be deposited in a vault in Henan. Ruan Yuan transmitted 100,000 taels to the Board, keeping the 6,947 taels until the next transmission.⁹

Saving Female Infants

This example of Ruan Yuan's efforts at righting the traditional wrongs has been noted in scholarly as well as popular writings because it appeared to be so extraordinary and original, especially for that time. He instituted a scheme to put a stop to the popular practice of drowning female infants by offering one tael of silver for each girl infant born.¹⁰ For the populace who used copper cash, a tael of silver, officially set to be one thousand copper cash, represented a fortune

7. GZD-JQ 004617 (JQ 6/10/17 [1801/11/22]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

8. GZD-JQ 008948 (JQ 7/10/9 [1802/11/4]), imperial edict quoted in memorial from Ruan Yuan. Ruan Yuan also gave the *juanna* amount of that month to be 19,600 taels, and the month before, 86,372 taels, from 196 individuals.

9. GZD-JQ 004617.

10. *Diziji* 2:3b–4. Also noted by such scholars as Chen Kangqi (陳康祺) (Qing dynasty), 'Ruan Wenda Zhengyinfa' (阮文達拯嬰法) [How Ruan Yuan saved the infants], in *Langqian Jiwen* (郎潛紀聞), (1984 edition), p. 87.

indeed. The reward money was to come out of a special fund contributed by various individuals, including Ruan Yuan himself. This scheme was clever. The parents registered the birth of the daughter with the local Director of Schools (*junxue jiaoshou guan* 郡學教授官).¹¹ Then, the parents would receive the tael when the infant reached one month. Ruan Yuan reasoned that, by the time a mother had nursed an infant for a month, there was no likelihood for her to allow any harm to befall the baby. Further, the Classics condemned the murdering of children.¹²

Foundling Home Reforms

Abandoned infants would be without any argument one group of persons who did not need to prove their eligibility for social welfare benefits. Foundling homes for abandoned infants were established in accordance with Board of Revenue regulations in prefectural and county seats throughout the provinces. Ruan Yuan discovered the foundling home in Hangzhou to be in name only. There were infants, but the wet nurses appeared to be ‘heavily powdered and rouged’,¹³ and expended their time entertaining ‘loafers and idlers (*xianza ren*, 閑雜人)’.¹⁴ Ruan Yuan charged two officials he trusted, Salt Commissioner Yanfeng (延豐) and Intendant of the Jiaxing-Huzhou Circuit Yuan Binzhi (袁秉直) with the responsibility to draft a set of new regulations to stop the home from being used as a bordello. Under the new regulations, wet nurses were not allowed to entertain guests or to leave the premise. Security at the main gate was reinforced. Older, presumably more mature and more responsible, women and men were employed to keep the gate and to keep the house in order. All residents were to receive nutritional sustenance. Medicine and other health supplements were also provided. They were issued warm clothing and bedding for the winter, and mosquito nets for the summer months. Thus, ‘the lives of many infants were saved.’¹⁵ The initial cost for this emergency rescue measure, four thousand taels, was drawn from the provincial salt fund. Similar regulations were also adopted for other foundling homes and orphanages throughout the province.

11. Girls were not a part of the education system of the Qing, so did not come under the jurisdiction of the schools. By choosing this official to be in charge of the programme, Ruan Yuan’s showed his preference for the educational rather than administrative arm of officialdom.

12. *Diziji* 2:4.

13. *YZBT* 4:14.

14. *Diziji* 2:14.

15. *YZBT* 4:14b

Poor House Improvements

The Board of Revenue regulations also prescribed that each county (*xian* 縣) maintain a home for the indigent in the community. Tung-tsu Ch'ü, has found that

... in every county there was a poorhouse, variously known as p'u-chi t'ang (*puji tang* 普濟堂), yang-chi yuan (*yangji yuan* 養濟院) or liu-yang chü (*liuyang ju* 留養局), where the aged, disabled, and poor were housed and given rations, clothing, and medical care.¹⁶

In theory, this was a good policy. In fact, however, each county had a limited quota, often short of the number of people needing care in these categories. There was never sufficient funding.¹⁷ Ruan Yuan took steps to make sure that as many of the needy as possible received aid.

In 1799–1800, Ruan Yuan found the poor house in Hangzhou in bad shape. The structure was unsafe. The residents as well as the workers comprised principally relatives of the *yamen* clerks and runners. Rations favoured the workers' friends. So, Ruan Yuan re-organized the institution, and put the management into the hands of the gentry.

A wealthy Senior Licentiate from Shaoxing, surnamed Gao (高), gave a large house he owned in Hangzhou to be used as the home for the indigent.¹⁸ Ruan Yuan raised a fund 'comprising several tens of thousand taels'¹⁹ from official and private contributors, including himself as well as 'a goodly number of salt merchants and wealthy gentry'.²⁰ This fund realized 15,000 taels annually to maintain the poor house. Ten regulations were issued in 1803.²¹ In addition to residents who met criteria for such assistance, following local customs, other qualified persons who were not residents in the particular district were also given rations of tea and hot water during the summer and fall months, hot ginger soup in the winter and spring. Medications for cholera, typhoid and other seasonal epidemic diseases such as influenza, were dispensed to those suffering. There was a monthly cash stipend as well as allowances for burial, including coffins.²²

16. Ch'ü, p. 161. Information inside the parentheses is mine.

17. Ch'ü, p. 161.

18. YZBT 4:14a–b.

19. YZBT 4:14.

20. YZBT 4:14.

21. YZBT 4:14; *Diziji* 2:15b.

22. The distribution of coffins made of lumber was important, since the poor could only afford grass mats without this government largess. Peasants used to send their dead to their burial places at dawn, with the body wrapped in grass mats, and a cockerel poised on top.

For one month, or forty days, just before and during the new lunar year, kitchens were opened to serve rice gruel. Padded clothes were issued at that time. A free ferry service was installed to carry persons in need across the Qiantang River to the gruel kitchens.²³

Examination Hall Repairs

Ruan Yuan took further measures to correct other ills he noted. He had known some of the problems since his tenure as Director of Studies in the province; others had become evident when he became Governor. The most critical of these problems arose from the unprecedented floods in 1800–1 and 1804–5 when waters rose to above three *chi* (尺), or roughly a metre or forty inches high.

When torrential rains fell, the buildings and grounds of the Examination Hall, due to lack of regular maintenance, became a quagmire. As examination neared in 1800, Ruan Yuan went to inspect the facilities for himself. What he saw shocked and enraged him. The roofs were almost non-existent. The floors of the ten thousand cubicles were puddles of mud, and the toilets overflowed, or worse. The conditions were so poor that unless emergency repairs were undertaken, ‘candidates would face sufferings of untold miseries’, if indeed it would be possible to hold the examination at all. So emergency measures had to be undertaken immediately.²⁴ Ruan Yuan ordered to have stone slabs placed on the cubicle floors. He reinforced the walls and roofs of the cubicles with baked clay bricks (*zhuan* 磚) and tiles (*wa* 瓦), installed new wooden planks on which the candidates were to write and to sleep, and drained the toilets. The cost was 4,660 taels.²⁵ He used a method of financing which he later adopted to fund the Xuehaitang Academy in Canton, by soliciting contributions from official and private individuals. The salt merchants of Hangzhou contributed 100,000 taels at that time. Interests from this fund, about 6,000 taels, were used for the emergency repairs to the Examination Hall. Subsequent interests of about 6,000 taels annually, were to be used for further maintenance.²⁶

While taking care of the Examination Hall repairs, Ruan Yuan also ordered the overflowing Canal as well as all the waste conduits in Hangzhou drained, and the West Lake dredged. To keep the lake from overflowing, Ruan Yuan ordered

23. YZBT 4:15b.

24. *Diziji* 2:8.

25. *Diziji* 2:8.

26. *Diziji* 2:19a–b.

three thousand willow trees planted along its shores.²⁷ It was at this time the Master Ruan's Island came into existence.

Favourable Winter Weather Forecasting a Good Harvest

The weather was favourable in the winter of 1801–2. In January, the right amount of snow fell at the right time and right place for the freshly planted winter crop of rice. Rice, the principal staple in the Asian diet, was important to all Chinese. It was especially important in Zhejiang because the province was a major centre of tribute rice production.

'The peasants in the countryside have reported joyfully how this snow is keeping the young rice plants protected from the cold while the moisture nourishes them. Conditions also seemed promising for the planting of vegetables in the spring,'²⁸ Ruan Yuan reported to the emperor.

The emperor responded with equal enthusiasm. 'You have been working so hard and selflessly to serve the people. The timely snowfall must be an auspicious sign.'²⁹

They were proved right, as there was a bumper harvest that summer. Someone painted a picture celebrating this good harvest. The name of the artist is lost, but Ruan Yuan's colophon to this work remains. 'Normally each stalk of the rice plant sports three or four stems, but this crop is sporting up to nine stems on each stalk, all brimming with rice.'³⁰ Hopefully, logically, with plentiful supply, rice prices would fall.

Alas, the price of rice again rose a few months after this exchange. Ruan Yuan intervened in the market by opening the granaries and increased the supply of rice. He eventually had to adopt measures to distribute rice and to feed the masses from government-operated gruel kitchens. At such times, it was always the poor who suffered the most. They did not have enough money to stock up rice when prices were low.

We have a detailed record of Ruan Yuan's disaster relief programme in 1805, principally because his father died during the summer, and he spent the next twenty-seven months in mourning. Consequently, he was able to put his Zhejiang papers — including anti-piracy as well as welfare — in order and reprinted almost all his memorials and the emperor's responses in *Yingzhou Bitan* (瀛舟筆談).

27. YZBT 4:11b–2b.

28. GZD-JQ 006850 (JQ 6/12/1 [1802/1/4]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

29. Imperial rescript, GZD-JQ 006850.

30. Ruan Yuan's colophon to the painting, 'Celebrating the Fine Harvest' (*Xihetu* 喜禾圖); *Diziji* 2: 23b.

Literature on Management of Rice Granaries

The types, organization of granaries, and indeed their uses as instruments of social welfare, have received attention from scholars working on local governments such as: T'ung-tsu Ch'ü, *Local Government in China under the Ch'ing* (1962), Kung-chuan Hsiao *Rural Control in Nineteenth Century China* (1967), Chuan Han-sheng and Richard A. Kraus, *Mid-Ch'ing Rice Markets and Trade: an Essay in Price History* (1975), and more recently, Pierre-Étienne Will and R. Bin Wong, with James Lee (ed.), *Nourish the People: The State Civilian Granary System in China, 1650–1850* (1991). Ruan Yuan's writings on the granaries, and how he used rice price as a yardstick to determine policies, can be found in his memorials to the emperor from 1800 to 1805. These memorials have been reprinted as essays in various collections of his works. The fifth *juan* of *Yingzhou Bitan*, for instance, contained all of the relevant memorials on this topic. Statistical information given in this chapter has been supplemented by extant archival documents.

Gentry Management

As Ruan Yuan was among the first provincial administrators appointed by the new regime after the demise of Heshen, to rid the widespread practice of corruption, he took the welfare programme completely out of the hands of the 'clerks', and brought the gentry into its management. The officials and the local gentry were charged with the task of initiating and implementing programmes of relief.

Responsibilities for management of the institutions were given to members of the local gentry. The emperor and court did not trust the officials who had served under Heshen. This attitude was transferred to provincial officials, including Ruan Yuan. Nor did they trust the lower-echelon employees of the local *yamen*, whom T'ung-tsu Ch'ü had called 'clerks'.³¹ Basically, it was advantageous for local gentry with degrees in their families and wealthy merchants without degrees to be amenable to the officials. It was important for the gentry and wealthy merchants in Hangzhou, especially at the beginning of a new reign when new relationships needed to be cemented, to be acknowledged for their socially responsible acts. Ruan Yuan was known to be close to the emperor and the court. It was beneficial for the gentry and merchants to work with him. 'Only when wealth was combined with political power could the people secure protection for themselves and their families.'³² So, they welcomed the opportunity to serve the community, and to work with the civil service.

31. Ch'ü, p. 161.

32. Ch'ü, p. 175.

In addition, the personal status of Ruan Yuan's wife, that enjoyed by a direct lineal descendant of Confucius and elder sister of the current Duke Yansheng, was attractive as well. Kong Luhua took a personal interest in the affairs of the founding home and the orphanage, and went to visit the children often, followed by ladies of the elite and parvenu of Hangzhou in her entourage and wake.³³

Ruan Yuan was following court policy to use the gentry for tasks heretofore had been assumed by local officials. (See *tuanlian*, for instance, in Chapter 4.) To avoid those who were corrupt, he put forth his gubernatorial efforts at reforming the institutions of care as soon as he arrived at Hangzhou by giving the management of the welfare programme to members of the gentry. In addition, he made certain that welfare programmes were so regulated and supervised that little room was left for corruption.³⁴

Welfare Programme Based on Price of Rice

Zhejiang produced two crops of rice annually. In addition to supplying the people, a certain amount of rice, in the form of tribute rice, a tax in kind, was sent to Beijing. Throughout the dynasty, monthly reports of market prices of several varieties of grain in terms of taels per *shi*, were sent by provincial officials to the emperor. These prices were used as a cost of living index as well as a yardstick to determine policy on welfare relief.³⁵ Since a 'basic characteristic of markets for most agricultural goods, and certainly for rice, is that the annual supply is not distributed evenly throughout the year, but is concentrated in a short harvest season.'³⁶

33. YZBT 4:15.

34. This system of gentry and the civil service working together did not always yield positive results, as Ruan Yuan had so optimistically wished. In *Local Merchants and the Chinese Bureaucracy 1750–1950* (1987), Susan Mann cited an example in Guangdong in the early years of the nineteenth century, where there were similar programmes to what Ruan Yuan was adopted in Zhejiang around the same time. 'Bandits were routed and driven away, military security on the coast improved, local government was upgraded, and schools, temples, and public buildings were rebuilt and restored, local waterways were dredged regularly.' See p. 128. Unfortunately, 'parapolitical organizations, run by local gentry' utilized their connections with officials to engage in extortions and other illegal activities at the same time, p. 135.

35. See Wang Yejian (王業儉), 'Qingdai Liangjia Chenbao zhidu' (清代糧價陳報制度), *National Palace Museum Quarterly* 13:1 (1978), pp. 53–66.

36. Han-sheng Ch'uan and Richard A. Kraus, *Mid-Ch'ing Rice Markets and Trade: An Essay in Price History* (1976), p. 19. I was brought up with the knowledge that rice prices were always at their highest before the harvest, when rice from the previous harvest was exhausted. China never produced sufficient rice to feed its people, hence rice had to be imported from Thailand. I am grateful to my mother for such information.

Government policy dictated several avenues of relief, some or all of which could be implemented at the same time. They included tax reduction or remission, or both, intervention of market price by releasing rice from the granaries, distribution of rice, or distribution of cooked rice in the form of gruel. Famine relief was the responsibility of local officials, but, in his first term as Governor of Zhejiang, Ruan Yuan took the lead. When he first went to Zhejiang as Governor in the winter 1799–1800, there was serious flooding in the province. Torrential rains again caused severe flooding in 1805. Such disasters were common along the Yellow River, but the extent and degree of damage caused by flooding in Zhejiang was rare.³⁷ Ruan Yuan's relief programme was worth noting. It is easy to see how the market price of rice, and their percentages of increase, determined what actions to take. Ruan Yuan believed that 'There is no ideal way to bring relief to the people. One must make a decision on what is most suitable way for the particular time and place.'³⁸

Reports of Snow, Rain, and Prices of Grain

Meanwhile, he duly reported the grain prices to the emperor. The reports, the Rainfall (*yu* 雨), Snowfall (*xue* 雪), and Prices of grains (*liangjia* 量價) memorials, gave the highest and lowest market prices for seven kinds of grain in terms of taels per *shi*. These grain were:

- White husked rice (*xianmi* 秈米)
- Fine white husked rice (*xi xianmi* 細秈米)
- Late harvested rice (*wanmi* 晚米)
- Fine late harvested rice (*xi wanmi* 細晚米)
- Barley (*damai* 大麥)
- Wheat (*xiaomai* 小麥)
- Soy bean (*huangdou* 黃豆)

Nine such reports from Ruan Yuan between August 1801 and August 1802, as enclosures to memorials, are extant at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. The following table was compiled from information extracted from these reports.³⁹

37. This flooding was recorded as one of the worst throughout Chinese history. See Deng Tuo (鄧拓), *Zhongguo Jiuhuangshi* (中國救荒史) (1998), p. 497.

38. 'Xiachuan Zhuzhen Tu Houba' (峽川煮賑圖後跋) [Colophon to a painting], in *YJSJ* II: 8.

39. GZD-JQ 006140, 006711, 007582, 007919, 008460, 8461, memorials from Ruan Yuan.

Table 8.2 Prices of rice in August (tael per *shi*), 1801–2

Prefecture	Price of Rice in 1801		Price of Rice 1802		% Price Increase for	
	Lowest Grade	Highest Grade	Lowest Grade	Highest Grade	Lowest Grade	Highest Grade
Hangzhou 杭州	1.15	2.05	2.24	2.74	94.78	33.66
Jiaxing 嘉興	1.62	1.94	2.19	2.55	35.19	31.44
Huzhou 湖州	1.67	2.00	2.15	2.43	24.74	21.50
Ningbo 寧波	1.49	2.02	1.99	2.53	33.56	25.25
Shaoxing 紹興	1.55	1.82	2.19	2.83	41.29	55.49
Taizhou 台州	1.25	1.95	1.63	2.18	30.40	11.79
Jinhua 金華	1.51	1.99	2.12	2.59	40.40	30.15
Chuzhou 衢州	1.61	2.11	2.50	2.99	61.49	41.71
Yanzhou 嚴州	1.43	1.88	2.05	2.50	43.36	32.98
Wenzhou 溫州	1.28	1.56	1.63	1.92	27.34	23.08
Chuzhou 處州	1.24	1.70	1.60	2.04	29.03	20.00

The reports gave sufficient information on price level of rice in all eleven prefectures. The highest percent of price increase was for the lowest grade of rice in Hangzhou, affecting the populace who normally bought the cheaper grade of rice. Immediately, Ruan Yuan opened gruel kitchens for the winter. Up to several thousand people lined up for the gruel every day.⁴⁰ Ruan Yuan's father

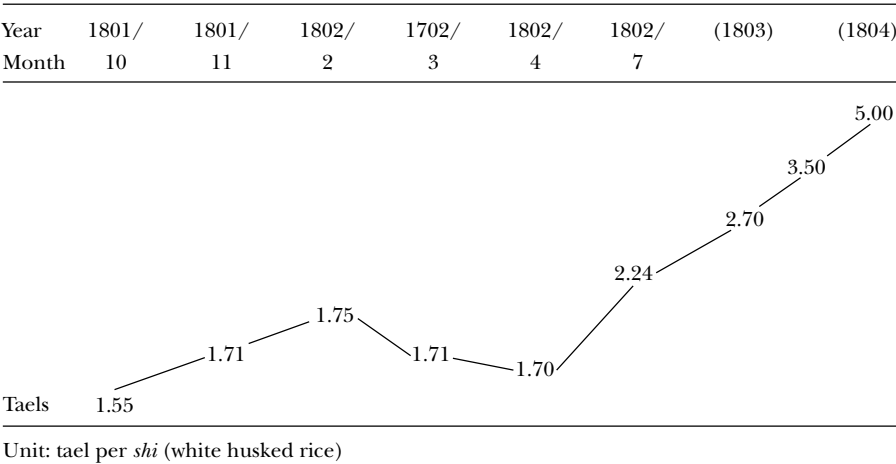


Figure 8.3 Fluctuations in rice prices, October 1801–August 1802

40. *Diziji* 2:12.

went to see the operation, and commented to his son proudly: ‘I saw old men and young children being sustained by the gruel kitchen. You are performing a good deed, indeed.’⁴¹

Ruan Yuan adopted a relief policy in three stages. Until the price of rice rose to two taels per *shi*, the government was to do nothing. When the price rose to two taels, the government would take action to intervene in the rice market by putting into the market rice from the granaries, in order to increase the supply and check the inflation (*pingdiao* 平糶). When the price rose to beyond 2.70 taels, government, and private individuals at the behest of the government, would institute relief by distributing rice, either as raw rice or as cooked gruel, to qualified residents in the localities designated to be ‘disaster areas’. From time to time when local supplies were insufficient, rice had to be imported from other provinces.

Rice Distribution Management

The most important social welfare programme Ruan Yuan introduced, in the sense that it affected the largest number of people and attracted for him the most public acclaim, was in famine relief.

The philosophical foundation for the traditional role undertaken by the Chinese state in ensuring that the people had sufficient rice, again found in the *Analects*, had been established long before the nineteenth century. Confucius wrote that ‘When the granaries and storage bins are full, then the people will be aware of propriety and restraint; when their clothing and food are adequate, then they will understand honour and shame.’⁴² Granary management was an important aspect of provincial and local governments.⁴³ Keeping the granaries full was not only a beneficent gesture, it was also a means to keep the people from rebelling. The emperors, therefore, paid personal attention to the conditions of the granaries. ‘When the Jiaqing emperor took the throne (*sic*) in 1799, he called for a careful review of granary accounts across the empire.’⁴⁴ Ruan Yuan memorialized the emperor that the granaries in Zhejiang had a short fall by more than four million *shi* of rice. After taking steps to refurbish, as of 24 March 1800, there was still a shortage of more than one million *shi*.⁴⁵ To correct

41. *Diziji* 2:12b.

42. Confucius, as cited in Hsiao, *Political Thought*, p. 355.

43. There were three types of granaries. Here I am only concerned with the type managed by the government. See Ch’ü, pp. 156–9.

44. R. Bin Wong, ‘Decline and Its Opposition 1781–1850’, in *Nourish the People* (1991), p. 78.

45. Ruan Yuan did not give the unit of grain storage, but all scholarly writings give the storage unit as *shi*.

this wrong, Ruan Yuan adopted a policy that followed the 'tendency that had been building since the late eighteenth century, when the bureaucracy gradually began to back away from handling large quantities of grain for famine relief, turning instead to financial measures as a way to ameliorate such crises'.⁴⁶

Ruan Yuan's Innovations and Management of Gruel Kitchens

On record were accounts of Ruan Yuan's management of gruel kitchens in three prefectures, Hangzhou, Jiaxing, and Huzhou in 1805, when the price of white husked rice rose to beyond five taels per *shi*, and when again there was serious flooding. The silk industry had collapsed. Ruan Yuan reported to the emperor on the conditions.

I have visited several prefectures and counties in the province. Although ordinarily the people in this province have appeared to be well-to-do and their lives comfortable, the current conditions are pitiful indeed. With the heavy rainfalls this spring and summer, the continuing cold and wet weather have been bad for sericulture. Looms have remained idle; people unemployed. The fields and salt flats are flooded. Wheat and rice are scarce; prices are high. Many in the towns and countryside have taken to begging. Everywhere the pitiful sight comprised the elderly and the sick, and fishermen from the boats too. There are many more of these poor people than even last year when conditions were not favourable either. The next harvest is not expected for another ninety days. I have discussed with the prefects and magistrates and have decided to request your permission to set up gruel kitchens to provide relief for the people.⁴⁷

With the emperor's consent, gruel kitchens were opened.⁴⁸ Altogether, there were 32 kitchens, with 160 gentry supervisors and 107 workers seconded from the government and the military.⁴⁹

Financing

Obtaining enough money to start the programme was the responsibility of the governor. Following precedence in famine relief established in Zhili, Ruan Yuan started to put together a fund to open gruel kitchens on a large scale in the

46. Pierre-Étienne Will, 'Bureaucracy and Famine', in *Nourish the People*, p. 295; pp. 313–4.

47. YZBT 5:26–7. The imperial edict giving permission was also reprinted on 5:27b–36. Extremely detailed instructions were given. These details were incorporated into the regulations for the gruel kitchens.

48. YZBT 5:31b–3b.

49. One official served at two different kitchens, so was counted as one instead of two.

autumn of 1805.⁵⁰ He collected contributions from the officials as well as private individuals. Personally he gave 10,000 taels. The Salt Commissioner in Zhejiang gave 3,000 taels, as did Ruan Yuan's father. The Financial Commissioner gave 5,000 taels, the Salt Controller 4,000 taels, and other officials chipped in 4,700 taels. The salt merchants, led by a Wu Kangcheng (吳康成), donated 160,000 taels.⁵¹

Location of Kitchens

The next task was to find sites to locate the gruel kitchens and organize personnel, supplies, equipment, and to make certain that the operations follow clearly written regulations. The centres had to be at locations which were easily accessible, with sufficient space for preparing, cooking, and distribution of the gruel. Ruan Yuan wrote to the emperor on his initial efforts.

I have consulted the officials and the gentry, and we agreed that in certain areas it is more convenient for the people to have uncooked rice distributed to them. We have set the amount of rice to be distributed according to the size of each household. For people to receive gruel that is already cooked, I found three temples with large grounds where marquees can be erected to serve a large number of people. I have also received offers from officials and members of the gentry to help with the gruel kitchens. So, from the first of the next month, we can start serving gruel to all people eligible for such benefit. In order to avoid inconvenience and embarrassment, degree holders did not have to queue for the rice or gruel rations. (They may send a household servant.)⁵²

Construction

The sites Ruan Yuan found were adjacent to religious edifices and military garrisons, not so much for security as for the large space they provided. The kitchens were set up in accordance with regulations of the central government, but the humanitarian touches were Ruan Yuan's own. Instead of being in the open like most gruel kitchens, marquees were constructed, so the people waiting could be kept out of the inclement weather. Wooden railings surrounding the enclosure kept out the people not eligible for the gruel, while protecting those eligible to enter. Entrance was by tally.

50. *Diziji* 2: 21b-2; *YZBT* 5:23a-b.

51. There was no record of the total amount received, suffice to say there was enough to operate the programme.

52. *Diziji* 2:21b-2.

Management

Officials and gentry worked together to supervise and manage the operation of the gruel kitchens. While officials supervised and managed the running of the gruel kitchens, while the gentry took care of the money and provisioning matters. Altogether, there were 107 official and 160 gentry supervisors. Their jobs did not involve the actual cooking of the rice gruel, nor its distribution. There were hired hands who performed these duties. Ruan Yuan devised clear regulations. Information detailed here has been taken from *Record of Disaster Relief in Zhejiang* (*Liang Zhe Zhengzai Ji* 兩浙賑災記), compiled by Zhang Jian.⁵³ In this work the names of all the holders of these offices were listed, as well as the daily wages for some of the hired hands.⁵⁴

Safety Concerns

The enclosure itself was spacious. Only the strongest bamboo and lumber were used for the construction of the marquees. Sturdy bamboo frames were put up first. Then two layers of bamboo mats covered the roof and three sides of the marquee to make sure that the people inside were protected from inclement weather and the severe winter cold. Handrails were installed for people to hold, so that they would not fall when the ground was slippery. There were separate sanitation facilities for women and men. Inside the marquee, wooden partitions were erected to ensure that the queue was orderly. Carpenters and masons made daily inspections of the marquees and made repairs wherever needed.

Organization of Personnel

There were gruel cooks, water carriers, rice carriers, gruel distributors, tally distributors, rice carriers, time keepers, messengers, military officers and guards to keep order, and, significantly, the gong ringer.⁵⁵ The gong ringer was important because he signified the start and finish of each day.

Work of the day was well regulated. Workers involved in preparing the rice for cooking, including those who manned the stoves, carried the water and washed the rice arrived shortly after midnight. The gruel kitchen bought rice from the

53. YZBT 5.

54. A cook, for instance, earned seventy cash daily. YZBT 5:

55. YZBT 5:25.

market, so the grade of rice used more likely than not contained husks and sometimes small pebbles, so had to be carefully washed and cleaned before it was fit for consumption. Therefore, a certain amount of preparation had to be done before rice and water could be placed in the cauldron to make gruel. Water had to be carried from the river or canal, cleaned with alum to get rid of the sediments, and boiled to get rid of the bacteria. These tasks were made more difficult due to the fact that there was no light during the predawn hours.

The tally distributors were the next to arrive. They had to be sufficiently literate in order to check the names of the gruel seekers against the local *baojia* registration list. The tallies were made of bamboo, with one of the ends painted and marked to differentiate the category under which the particular recipient was entitled to her or his ration of gruel. The recipients exchanged the tally for the gruel. All the tallies were counted at the end of the day to ensure that the number of tallies matched the number of recipients.

Humanitarian Measures

These were unusual circumstances. People who travelled daily to obtain these rations, carrying their own receptacle, were not always in the best of physical condition. Privacy was provided for nursing mothers, and there were separate facilities for women with young children, and for the elderly. Pregnant women finding themselves in labour while waiting in queue for the gruel could depend on help from the midwives on hand. Ruan Yuan set up first-aid stations. Medical personnel stood by and medicine was dispensed. Sometimes the sick died on the spot, so services were provided for the dead, and assistance for the relatives they left behind. Since the recipients were classified as *the indigent*, coffins were provided, as well as other burial expenses. Other humanitarian measures include the following regulation.

It may not be convenient for the new mother to come herself to stand in queue for the gruel the next few days, she may take home with her rice ration for this period.⁵⁶

Members of the gentry, should they also need sustenance, did not have to stand in queue. They could send servants to pick their daily rations.

56. YZBT 5:34b.

Number of People Served

From seven o'clock in the morning to noon, about four thousand persons could be served from each marquee. With thirty-two gruel kitchens, ignoring the differences in size as reflected in the number of employees but taking an estimate, the number given in Ruan Yuan's paper, 'several tens of thousand' people being kept alive during the famine appears realistic.

Simple but Sensible Measures to Keep out Corruption

To keep the workers honest, all, including the supervisors and the military, were required to eat the gruel they prepared, cooked, and distributed. Apparently, in order to make the gruel appear thicker and fuller of rice, corrupt officials used to mix cement into the gruel. Cement thickened the semi-liquid gruel, but it was dangerous to health. By requiring all personnel, including the soldiers on guard, to eat the same provision as the recipients, Ruan Yuan took away one means to cheat.⁵⁷ In addition, the gruel had to be thick enough to hold a pair of chopsticks standing in it.

Concluding Comments

Did the feeding the people programme work? These rice distribution and gruel kitchens must have been better than others. People from other provinces tried to enter the enclosure and receive relief that was not available to them at home. In any case, members of the gentry who contributed their money and labour to these gruel stations were given titles and ranks, and Ruan Yuan received commendations for his efforts.⁵⁸

Attention must be called to the fact that, during these years, Ruan Yuan's priority was piracy suppression. While devising the gruel distribution stations, he was also equipping the provincial armed forces in pursuit of Cai Qian. He was also collecting rare books to send to Beijing, working with scholars on compilation of books, print books, founding libraries and academies, and a host of other scholarly pursuits. His wife was interested, and helpful, in some of his welfare programmes, but there had to be an explanation for his personal attention to social welfare. His deprived childhood could explain some of his sympathy for

57. YZBT 5:33–5.

58. YZBT 5:35b.

people who were suffering. However, I suspect there were other reasons. This was his first provincial post; he was young, energetic, enthusiastic, and wanting to be part of the emperor's effort at correcting all the wrongs of the final decades of the Qianlong regime. He was able to print the records of his work in Zhejiang principally because he had time. Shortly after the major disaster relief efforts, his father died and he had almost three years to put his records in order in *Yingzhou Bitan*. He was not to enjoy another comparable opportunity to organize his papers ever again.

PART THREE

Ruan Yuan at Leisure

9

Scholar and Patron of Learning of the Mid-Qing Era

As a scholar and patron of learning Ruan Yuan is well known. His intellectual interests encompassed a wide range of research. With more than eighty extant publications with his name as author, compiler, or editor, there are also scores of forewords and epilogues to other scholars' works, indicating that at least he was familiar with their contents. It was not easy for him to manage his government job and scholarly activities at the same time. Conflict of demands invariably occurred. In 1814, when time passed and he had not succeeded in capturing Zhu Maoli in Jiangxi, the Jiaqing Emperor ranted his frustrations in writing: 'Is Ruan Yuan deaf and dumb like a wooden dummy,'¹ or 'is he spending too much time on literary compilations and neglecting his official responsibilities?'² Consequently, whatever time and energy Ruan Yuan expended on scholarly pursuits, they could not be his top priority.

Ruan Yuan's Publications

A full list of his extant publications can be found in Appendix IV. I have already described the circumstances which led to some of his earlier publications in Chapters 2 and 3, when he was a young metropolitan graduate in Beijing and provincial director of studies in Shandong and Zhejiang. After he assumed high positions in the provinces where funding was available, he continued endeavours employing scholars with expertise in all areas. Under his aegis, some of the most important publications of the Qing dynasty, from dictionaries to new editions of the Classics, were compiled and printed. In addition to the classics, both original analyses and new editions as a result of etymological investigations, he left works in all areas of scholarship, comprising works in archaeology and epigraphy,

1. GZD-JQ019008. Imperial rescript.

2. GZD-JQ019639. Imperial rescript.

bibliography and annotated catalogues, biography, dictionaries and lexicography, history and geography, anthropology and ethnology, literature, mathematics and astronomy, and technology. He also compiled major anthologies of works by scholars and poets whose works would not have survived otherwise.

His writings on the Classics were printed in collections such as his *Collection from the Yanjing Studio* (*Yanjing Shiji* 擘經室集). They included essays of various lengths on topics from definitions of concepts such as *ren* (仁) and *xing* (性) to longer discourses of passages from texts such as the *Classic of Rites*, especially the *Yili* (儀禮). Some of his writings have been attacked by Mainland scholars for his political and interpretative perspectives,³ but his contributions to classical learning have been recognized as unparalleled. He completed a new edition of *The Thirteen Classics* with commentary essays of various ages (*Shisanjing Zhushu Fu Jiao Kanji* 十三經注疏附校勘記). This work has remained a standard text today. It was the principal text used by James Legge for his translation of the Chinese Classics into English.⁴ Equally indispensable to modern art historians are his identifications and analyses of ancient inscriptions found on bronzes and stone, as printed in *Inscriptions on Bronze and Stone from Shandong* (*Shanzuo Jinshi Zhi* 山左金石志), *Inscriptions on Bronze and Stone from Zhejiang* (*Liangzhe Jinshi Zhi* 兩浙金石志), and *Identifications of Inscriptions on Bronzes in the Jigu Studio* (*Jiguzhai Zhongding Yiqi Kuanshi* 積古齋鐘鼎彝器款識), among others.

His interests and achievements in history, geography and historical geography were evident in the compilation of provincial gazetteers, such as the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Guangdong* (*Guangdong Tongzhi* 廣東通志), the *Draft Comprehensive Gazetteer of Yunnan* (*Yunnan Tongzhi Gao* 雲南通志稿), *Exploration of a World Map* (*Diqiu Tushuo* 地球圖說), and *Study of Old Landmarks in Zhejiang* (*Zhejiang Fanghu 'Lingqin Cimu' Lu* 浙江防護『陵寢祠墓』錄). He also wrote essays on practical subjects such as *Measurement on Storage of Tribute Rice* and *A Discourse on Sea Transport*, both are classified as 'statecraft' literature.

The biographies he compiled gave modern historians a sense of learning of the era. His *Draft Biographies of Scholars* (*Rulin Zhuangao* 儒林傳稿), men of learning who did not hold offices above the third rank, therefore would not have official biographies compiled by the Historiography Office, became a part of the *Draft*

3. For example, see article from Marxist perspective by Cheng Mingshi (承名世) of the Shanghai Museum, 'Zhu Yuanzhang de Liangtong Junling – Jialun Qingren de Fansuo Kaozheng' (朱元璋的兩通軍令 — 兼論清人的煩瑣討論), *Wenwu* (文物) 243 (July 1976), pp. 37–44.

4. The copy in the Hong Kong University Library is James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, with a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes. Printed at the London Mission Society Printing Office, Hong Kong, 1861–72.

History of the Qing Dynasty (*Qingshi Gao* 清史稿). The *Biographies of Mathematicians and Astronomers* (*Chouren Zhuan* 疇人傳) pioneered the systematic study of the history of a specific discipline by including the life and work, albeit briefly, of Chinese and Western mathematicians and astronomers in chronological order.

Ruan Yuan printed works by other scholars who perhaps would have disappeared from history otherwise. Among these were *Diagulou Ji* (雕菰樓集) by Jiao Xun and *Shuxue* (述學) by Wang Zhong, which included some of the most original analyses of ancient classical texts of the mid-Qing, critical components of the School of Han Learning and, by later classification, the Yangzhou School of Learning. *Guochao Hanxue Shicheng Ji* (國朝漢學師承記), biographical studies of Han Learning Scholars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century by Jiang Fan, was compiled under Ruan Yuan's aegis. He also printed major anthologies of poetry. These editions include *Liangzhe Youxuan Lu* (兩浙猶軒錄), collection of works by poets in Zhejiang from the early Qing to the Qianlong era, including women, and *Collection of Poems by the Brave Souls of the Huaihai Region* (*Huaihai Yingling Ji* 淮海英靈集), works by poets from the Yangzhou area.

Significant Role of Ruan Yuan

Ruan Yuan's importance as a scholar and as a patron to learning of the mid-Qing has been noted by contemporary and twentieth-century historians and literary critics in and outside China. When they wrote on the mid-Qing, without exception, they included Ruan Yuan. Recent historians began to examine his writings, his thinking and his research methodology, and viewed him beyond his influential leadership, as a link of classical scholarship between the School of Han Learning of the eighteenth century and the New Text School of the early nineteenth.

Liu Shouzheng (劉壽曾 1837–82), a grandson of Liu Wenqi (劉文淇 1777–1846), who spent much time with Ruan Yuan after the latter's retirement in Yangzhou (1838–49), was the first on record to evaluate Ruan Yuan's long-term contributions to learning as a leader.

For scholarship and learning to flourish, there must be an innovative leader who could command support from other scholars. Ruan Yuan was such a leader. Especially since he lived to a ripe old age and resided in different regions of the country, he collected a large number of followers – scholars who carried his work far and wide, and to succeeding generations. He was the (Mid-Qing) era's last major scholar of significance.⁵

5. Liu Shouzheng, *Liu Zhouzheng Ji* (劉壽增集) (1883) (2001 printing), pp. 54–5.

Zhang Shunhui (張舜徽), who quoted this passage in his study of the Yangzhou scholars, did not consider Liu's view on Ruan Yuan an overexaggeration. It was Zhang who asserted that 'Ruan Yuan's contributions to Chinese civilization of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot be allowed to be overlooked.'⁶

Zhang needed not to have worried, for Ruan Yuan had not been forgotten. The number and scope of his publications alone would not have permitted him to disappear into the historical void. In fact, the giants of intellectual history and literary criticism of early modern China, Liang Qichao (梁啟超) and Hu Shi (胡適) in the 1920s, followed by equally illustrious Qian Mu (錢穆) and Xiao Yishan (蕭一山) in the 1930s, lauded Ruan Yuan and his place in the development of scholarship and learning during the mid-Qing. Liang wrote in 1924 from Beijing,

Ruan Yuan of Yizheng served in the provinces for several decades. Everywhere he promoted learning. He exerted tremendous influence on his contemporaries throughout Zhejiang, Guangdong, and Yunnan.⁷

Hu Shi, who was in Beijing at the same time, so could have discussed Ruan Yuan and mid-Qing scholarship with Liang, added,

Ruan Yuan's special talents rested in his ability to collect the leading scholars of the day, and have them working together to compile such major publications as *Jingji Zuangu* (經籍纂詁), *Shisanjing Jiaokanji* (十三經校勘記), *Chouren Zhuan* (疇人傳), and many more. He also printed works by other scholars, among whom were Jiao Xun (焦循), Wang Zhong (汪中), Ling Tingkan (凌廷堪), and Liu Taigong (劉台拱). His *Huang Qing Jingjie* (皇清經解), comprising 1,400 *juan*, represented the first conclusive study of the Classics by scholars of the Qing dynasty.⁸

A decade later, Qian Mu placed Ruan Yuan in the context of his contemporaries.

Ruan Yuan, whose attainments and publications surpassed all others of his generation, was the last significant classical scholar of the Qing dynasty His personal standing as well as his publications out-distanced all the other talented scholars; he was their leader, the last significant classical scholar of the era.⁹

6. Zhang Shunhui, *Qingdai Yangzhou Xueji* (清代揚州學記) (1962), p. 143.

7. Liang Qichao, *Qingdai Xueshu Gailun* (清代學術概論) (1924) (1977 edition), pp. 108–9. For some unexplained reason, Liang omitted Jiangxi, where Ruan Yuan compiled and printed the *Thirteen Classics*, a major work. Perhaps Liang was just citing samples and the province did not come to mind.

8. Hu Shi, *Dai Tongyuan de Zhexue* (戴東原的哲學) (1925) (1976 edition), p. 138.

9. Qian Mu, *Zhongguo Jin Sanbainian Xueshu Shi* (中國近三百年學術史) (1972 edition), pp. 528–9.

Meanwhile, the historian Xiao Yishan, compiler of the all encompassing *General history of the Qing Dynasty* (*Qingdai Tongshi* 清代通史), observed,

Ruan Yuan was among the leaders of Qing classical scholars. Others, such as Bi Yuan and Wang Chang, could not match the wide expanse of his research.¹⁰

Xiao further wrote,

Ruan Yuan's contributions to learning were not confined to his own writing. He established institutions that gave other scholars the opportunity to teach, to research and to publish. Other scholars of the era were influenced by him. The range of his academic attainments far surpassed those of his contemporaries, such as Wang Chang, Bi Yuan, and Zhu Yun.¹¹

In 1942, the Japanese scholar, Fijitsuka Chikashi, who was interested primarily in Ruan Yuan's calligraphy, wrote on his influence as a scholar as well.

Ruan Yuan was a leading scholar of the Qianlong, Jiaqing, and Daoguang reigns. He brought the civilization of the Qing dynasty to the attention of contemporary and future generations. His work had depth, and covered a wide range of research.¹²

Ruan Yuan the Scholar in Western Writings

Ruan Yuan and his works were attracting attention of scholars writing in Western languages after the Opium War. His name was already known from his years in Canton. In 1904, a 35-page biography of Ruan Yuan in French by A. Vissière was published in *T'oung Pao*.¹³ Two score years later, Wolfgang Franke's essay in German was printed in *Monumenta Serica*.¹⁴ The Vissière biography was actually no more than a translation of Ruan Yuan's chronological biography from *Biographies of Officials of the Qing Dynasty* (*Guochao Xianzheng Shilue* 國朝先正事略) compiled by Li Yuandu (李元度) in 1866. Franke, however, consulted more sources, including Ruan Yuan's own records and the references by Liang Qichao, Qian Mu, and Xiao Yishan quoted earlier in this chapter. Franke cited Vissière as well as other Chinese and Japanese authors who wrote on Ruan Yuan, but his attention was focused principally on Ruan Yuan's publications, listing all the works in accordance with traditional Chinese classification scheme, thus making available

10. Xiao, *Qingdai Tongshi* (清代通史) (1976) II, p. 717.

11. Xiao, *Qingdai Tongshi* (1976) II, p. 717.

12. Fijitsuka Chikashi, 'Gen Undai to Richo no Kingendo' (1942), p. 2.

13. A. Vissière, 'Le Biographe de Jouân Yuan (1764–1849): Traduite du Chinois et annotée par A. Vissière', *T'oung Pao* II (1904), pp. 561–96.

14. Wolfgang Franke, 'Juan Yuan (1764–1849)', *Monumenta Serica* 9 (1944), pp. 53–80.

the titles of Ruan Yuan's publications, at least, to German readers. Meanwhile, a biography of Ruan Yuan in English by Fao Chao-ying was included in *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*.¹⁵

Susan Mann Jones and Philip A. Kuhn noted Ruan Yuan in the *Cambridge History of China*, more as a patron of learning than as a scholar or as an official:

(Ruan Yuan regarded) himself as a scholar and patron of letters, much in the eighteenth century manner cultivated by the brother of his guarantor Chu Kuei (Zhu Gui). Juan (Ruan) was also, however, a skilled administrator with an eye for talent. He had influence at court and his reputation inspired confidence in areas where he held office. After 1799 he held a number of provincial posts, in two of which he founded academies which became renowned centres of education: the Ku-ching ching-she in Hangchow (1801) and the Hsueh-hai T'ang.¹⁶

Benjamin A. Elman, whose expertise includes intellectual history of the Qing period, wrote two books as well as several essays on mid-Qing learning. Individual scholars of the era, including Ruan Yuan, were featured prominently.¹⁷ Elman clarified the sources of Ruan Yuan's scholarship, including his research methodology:

Strongly influenced by Tai Chen (Dai Zhen) ... Juan Yuan (Ruan Yuan) analyzed ancient glosses to recover the old meaning of terms in the Classics. These 'original meanings' had been lost, according to Juan, because of the heterodox sutra of Buddhist and Taoist interpretations imposed by the Sung-Ming scholars. His consideration of the structure and changes of written graphs over them, Juan compared the Classics with inscriptions on ancient relics. This approach was combined with an inductive analysis of Han dynasty (texts and commentaries). Classical grammar and historical linguistics were thereby informed by the etymological research upon which *kaocheng* linguistic theory was based.¹⁸

As a Link between Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Scholarship

It is important to note that, towards the middle of the twentieth century, when historians in China began to look at the Qing era with more objectivity, in the sense that they began to accept that scholars working under Manchu rule could

15. *ECCP*, pp. 399–402.

16. Jones and Kuhn, 'Dynastic Decline and the Roots of Rebellion', in *CHOC* X:1 p. 158. This is interesting because Professor Kuhn was the one who first suggested to me to look at Ruan Yuan's work in security and control.

17. See *From Philosophy to Philology: Social and Intellectual Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (1984; revised edition 2001) and *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch'ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (1990). For essays, see Bibliography III.

18. Elman, *Philosophy to Philology*, p. 48. Elman cited several sources, including He Yousen's essays.

and did make positive contributions to the development of Chinese classical learning, Ruan Yuan was viewed as the link between the intellectual development of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In a brief biography in commemoration of the ninetieth anniversary of Ruan Yuan's death in 1938, Yan Mi noted his significance to mid-Qing scholarship and learning.

After Dai Zhen, there was one man during the mid-Qing who promoted works of classical learning without prejudice. He was able to find a meeting ground for Han Learning and Song Learning. Recognized at a young age for his intellectual strength, he enjoyed a distinguished career and was known both in China and abroad. He lived to a ripe old age, so his influences spread far and wide. This man was Ruan Yuan.¹⁹

In 1971, Professor He Yousen (何佑森) of the University of Taiwan gave Ruan Yuan credit for advancing learning during the mid-Qing era, 'as a bridge between the ideas and methods of the Han Learning scholars in *Guochao Hanxue Shichengji* (國朝漢學師臣記) [Han Learning scholars of the Qing dynasty] by Jiang Fan (江藩) and those expressed in the later work of Chen Li (陳澧 1810–82), *Dongyuan Dushuji* (東原讀書記) [Chen Li's notes on the classics].'²⁰ In this work, Chen had argued against the viewpoint of earlier classicists that Han era scholars had ignored metaphysical study. Professor He observed that

Recent scholarship had neglected the significance of this transitional period, thereby had underestimated the significance of Ruan Yuan's contributions to the development of classical learning of the mid-Qing era.²¹

Professor He further noted that it was after seeing Ruan Yuan in Yangzhou in 1841 that Chen came to this conclusion.

After becoming a fellow of the Xuehaitang, Chen Li went to visit Ruan Yuan in Yangzhou in 1841, and again three years later. These two visits had influenced tremendously the direction of Chen's later thinking.²²

Benjamin Elman synthesized the studies and further linked Ruan Yuan with later scholars. He noted that Ruan Yuan's 'personal ties with many of the scholars associated with the Ch'ang-chou New Text tradition (provided a strong link

19. Yang Mi (仰彌), 'Ruan Wenda Shishu' (阮文達事述) *Zhonghe Monthly* (中和月刊) 1:9 (1940), p. 46.

20. He Yousen (何佑森), 'Chen Lanfu de Xueshu jiqi Yuanyuan' (陳蘭甫的學術及其淵源) *Gugong Wenxian* (故宮文獻) 2:4 (1971), p. 1.

21. He, 'Ruan Yuan de Jingxue Jiqi Zhixue Fangfa' (阮元的經學及其治學方法) *Gugong Wenxian* 2:1 (1970), p. 19.

22. He, 'Ruan Yuan de Jingxue' (阮元的經學) (1970), p. 1.

between) the School of Han Learning and the New Text scholarship in the early nineteenth century.²³ Elman showed how a New Text scholar, Gong Zizhen (龔自珍 1792–1841),

praised Ruan's talents in the textual fields associated with evidential scholarship, but he also pointed to Ruan's considerable contributions to philosophy and literature. According to Gong, Ruan's prodigious erudition had enabled him to encompass both Han and Song Learning. In his introduction to the *Guoshi Rulin Zhuan* (Biographies of Qing scholars), Ruan himself contended that Qing scholars had been successful in paying heed to the questions of nature (human and otherwise) and the Way, emphasized in Song Learning, and in using the principles of Han Learning to apply these questions to practical use.²⁴

As a result, for scholars today inside and outside China interested in Qing learning, Ruan Yuan, as well as the scholars associated with him, became increasingly of significance. The scholars in Hangzhou and Canton were noted through their publications, but the ones in Yangzhou came to be known through their personal association with Ruan Yuan himself.

Yangzhou School of Learning

A century after Ruan Yuan's death, Zhang Shunhui called attention to the existence the scholars in Yangzhou during the mid-Qing, including Ruan Yuan, as a distinct group with characteristics of its own, or as a 'school of learning'. Zhang's findings, first made public through a series of lectures in 1946 given in western China and subsequently published in 1962 with a new reprint in 2004, systematized the study of Han Learning scholars in and around Yangzhou of Ruan Yuan's time. He recognized Ruan Yuan's open mind in working with scholars of all convictions and in publishing their works, regardless whether he agreed with their findings. As a result, it was possible for scholars of a later era to synthesize Han and Song learning.²⁵ From Zhang's usage, the term 'Yangzhou School of Learning' as an offshoot of the Suzhou and Anhui Schools, but a separate entity in itself, began to attract attention of scholars, including historians focusing on the Mid-Qing.

Antecedents of the Yangzhou School

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, Han Learning scholarship was established in Yangzhou through the presence of several scholars who investigated

23. Elman, *Classicism* (1990), p. 221.

24. Elman, *Philosophy to Philology* (1984), p. 273.

25. Zhang, *Qingdai Yangzhou Xueji* (清代揚州學記), p. 144.

a variety of ancient sources and wrote treatises in a myriad of disciplines. These scholars were influenced by two earlier scholars: Dai Zhen of Anhui and Hui Dong (惠棟 1697–1758) of Suzhou. Dai, whose ideas and research methodology have been discussed in Chapter 2, applied the approved technique he had inherited from earlier Qing scholars ‘with rigorous exactness to the study of the laws of phonetic changes, etymology, textual criticism, mathematics and astronomy.’²⁶ Hui advocated a philological or textual study of the Classics that differed from the ideological approach of the Song and Ming Neo-Confucian scholars by examining with great care and in meticulous detail the oldest extant texts. He also studied the historical annotations, namely, those of the Han dynasty scholars, bypassing those of the centuries in between.²⁷ Whereas Dai Zhen went beyond classical learning to a new philosophy to benefit society through practical application of the knowledge (*shixue* 實學), Hui and his followers retained their focus on authenticating classical texts. These two schools were not incompatible, although each had its own special characteristics. It was from both these schools that the Yangzhou scholars emerged.

Since the 1980s, Professor Qi Longwei (祁龍威, b. 1922) of the now University of Yangzhou, has been the driving force behind a movement to have more general recognition of the ‘Yangzhou School of Learning’. Professor Qi called a symposium in 1988, right after the printing of a volume of essays entitled the *Yangzhou School of Learning* (*Yangzhou Xuepai Yanjiu* 揚州學派研究). Meanwhile, scholars at the Academia Sinica in Taiwan began to investigate the Yangzhou scholars as a school. The two groups met in a symposium in 1999, resulting in the publication of *Qing Dynasty Scholarship of Yangzhou* (Qingdai Yangzhou Xueshu Yanjiu 清代揚州學術研究), edited by Qi and Lin Qingzhang (林慶彰) of the Academia Sinica, and printed in Taipei in 2001 in traditional characters. These papers defined and clarified a number of issues involved in the subject.

Parameters of the Yangzhou School

The term a ‘school of learning’ means a group of scholars who share some kind of commonality. ‘A single individual scholar does not form a school’, Tang Zhijun (湯志鈞) pronounced at the 1999 symposium.²⁸ Benjamin Elman clarified the concept more explicitly when he wrote on mid-Qing schools of learning:

26. Fang Chao-ying, Biography of Tai Chen (Dai Zhen), in *ECCP*, p. 697.

27. Hiromu Momose, Biography of Hui Tung (Hui Dong), in *ECCP*, p. 357.

28. Tang Zhijun (湯志鈞), ‘Qingdai Jingxue Xuepai Jiqi Yitong’ (清代經學學派及其異同), *Qingdai Yangzhou Xuesu Yanjiu* (2001), pp. 1–20.

School divisions were taken for granted as evidence of the filiation of scholars, who through personal or geographical, philosophic or literary agreement, or master-disciple relations could be linked together into specific groups.²⁹

Therefore, when we define a school, the criteria of proximity, both in physical distance and in the intellectual scope, must be considered.

The Yangzhou School of Learning encompassed a number of scholars of the mid-Qing era in and around the Prefecture of Yangzhou in Jiangsu, engaged in research and writing in the tradition of Han Learning. Given the definitions offered by Tang and Elman, the classification of scholars in Yangzhou into a school is acceptable. Since the grouping of these scholars into a school did not occur until long after the time when the scholars were active, the persons involved were better known for their individual attainments than as a group. The school comprised fewer than a dozen names, the most prominent of which was understandably Ruan Yuan, not only for his political and social attainments, but also for the widest range in his research and the largest number of publications with his name as author, editor, or compiler.

Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn here that the affinity of the Yangzhou scholars was principally geographical, and the other important link was Ruan Yuan.

Historians working on membership of this school generally consider its first scholar to be Wang Niansun, the senior of the 'Two Wangs'. Wang Senior had studied under Dai Zhen — when they were both in Beijing, not at Yangzhou as had been commonly taken for granted. The last scholar of this School was Liu Shipai, who brought Yangzhou learning into the twentieth century, but to my way of thinking it was perhaps stretching the time frame by including him. Jiang Fan, author of the lives of Han Learning scholars in the Hui Dong tradition, however, was not always included despite the fact that he hailed from Jiangdu, the very heart of Yangzhou.

Characteristics of the Yangzhou School

Proponents of the Yangzhou School believe that, in comparison with its predecessors, the Yangzhou scholars were the most thorough in their research, and hence their findings brought about even further research on the topics concerned. The proponents quote the following passage by Zhang Shunhui explicating the fundamental characteristics of the various schools of Han Learning.

29. Elman, 'Ch'ing Dynasty "Schools" of Scholarship', *Ch'ing-shih Wen-t'i* 4: 6 (1981), p. 1

In my study of Qing literary studies, I have found that while the scholars of the Suzhou School excelled in their specializations (*zuizhuan* 最專) and the scholars in the Anhui School caught the most essence of the classics (*zuijing* 最精), it was the scholars of Yangzhou whose research efforts were the most thorough (*zuitong* 最通). Without the special contributions made by the scholars of the Suzhou and Anhui Schools, Qing scholarship could not have risen to such heights. Without the thoroughness of the research by scholars of the Yangzhou School, Qing scholarship could not have reached to such a wide extent.³⁰

Table 9.1 Selected Yangzhou School of Learning scholars and relationships with Ruan Yuan

Name	Relationship with Other Noted Scholars	Relationship with Ruan Yuan
Wang Niansun (1744–1832)	studied with Dai Zhen; father of Wang Yinzhi	introduced Ruan Yuan to Han learning and research methodology
Wang Zhong (1745–94)	served on staff of Zhu Yun; friend of Ling Tingkan	works printed by Ruan Yuan
Ling Tingkan (1757–1809)	friend of Wang Niansun and Wang Zhong	tutored Ruan Yuan's sons; Ruan Yuan introduced him to Ziyang Academy in Hangzhou; works printed by Ruan Yuan
Jiao Xun (1763–1820)	friend of Ling Tingkan	married to Ruan Yuan's cousin; served on Ruan Yuan's staff; worked on <i>Chouren Zhuan</i> and other compilations; works printed by Ruan Yuan
Ruan Yuan 1764–1849	junior to Wang Niansun; friend of Wang Yingzhi; friend of Jiao Xun; friend of Ling Tingkan	
Wang Yinzhi (1766–1834)	son of Wang Niansun	work printed by Ruan Yuan
Liu Wenqi (1777–1846)		disciple of Ruan Yuan; spent much time with Ruan Yuan after his retirement

Zhang had claimed that a weakness of eighteenth-century scholarship was the scholars' insistence on focusing their in-depth research on a narrow topic. On the other hand,

30. Zhang, *Qingdai Yangzhou Xueji* (1962), p. 2.

the Yangzhou scholars, such as Wang Zhong, Jiao Xun, and Ruan Yuan, were willing to offer original perspectives when they braved their inquiries on various topics, especially those on ethics (moral principles). In the footsteps of Dai Zhen of the Anhui School, these scholars in Yangzhou examined the Song and Ming eras' idealism in approaching *lixue* 理學 [external exemplification of eternal principles] with strict discipline and thoroughness. Therefore, if only for their philosophical treatises, the Yangzhou scholars are worth our study.³¹

Since the scholars worked on their own rather than each taking on one aspect of a more general research topic, it is easier to understand the breadth of the individual research. Even if we exclude Ruan Yuan's, publications by the other scholars in all areas of knowledge are impressive. They embraced all aspects of classical studies. Ling Tingkan even left compositions of flute music. The scholars, however, except for the Wangs — father and son — worked individually. Except for geographic proximity, the common denominator of the Yangzhou School was Ruan Yuan.

The Jingji Zuangu: Classical Dictionary

Not only did Ruan Yuan establish a strong foundation in Han Learning, he widened the parameter of Han Learning scholarship, especially the educational vitality and research methodology of Dai Zhen. By printing the works of Jiao Xun and Wang Zhong, creating a new independent set of criteria for scholarship, he transformed elements of the Anhui School into a separate Yangzhou School of Learning.³² Evidential research as reflected in his insistence on returning interpretations of ancient classics to as early as possible, hence the compilation of the Classical dictionary and the founding of academies to teach a new generation of scholars the basics. Ruan Yuan wrote:

The teachings of the sages are found in the Classics. Without knowing the pronunciation and meaning of the words and terms in the Classics, correct interpretations would not be possible. The Han era scholars lived in a time much closer to the sages who wrote the Classics than later writers, whose thoughts were further diluted by other thoughts (Buddhist and Daoist), so the writings of the Han era would be much closer to the original.³³

31. Zhang, p. 4.

32. Wang and Huang, *Qingdai Xueshu yu Wenhua* (清代學術與文化), p. 343.

33. Ruan Yuan, 'Xihu Gujing Jingshe Ji' (西湖詁經精社記), in *IJSJ* 1:7.

Ruan Yuan's solid educational background that included Tang and Song editions and interpretations of the Classics, however, was perhaps what enabled him to see beyond Han Learning into acceptance of incorporation elements of writings of other eras and perspectives into classical learning. 'I first began to study the Classics by learning the writings of the Tang and Song scholars.'³⁴ Throughout his life, he maintained that 'the purist and best of Classical scholarship was before the Tang and Song'.³⁵

Patronage of Scholarship

How did Ruan Yuan manage to be so prolific in scholarly production when he was a full-time provincial official handling all the critical problems discussed in the previous chapters? Part of the answer lies in the nature of these official positions in that they made it possible for Ruan Yuan to maintain around him a staff of scholars with expertise in multiple fields. As an official, especially as the chief administrative official in the prosperous provinces, he had sufficient resources at his command to provide jobs or create opportunities for scholars who shared his interests. One may assume with limited time for practical research and writing on his own, it must have been the scholars around him, who were responsible for the lion's share of Ruan Yuan's literary productions.

More than four hundred scholars associated with Ruan Yuan, with sixty-odd actually drawing salaries as members of his personal staff from time to time, have been identified here. Some of these four hundred men were already acknowledged scholars when Ruan Yuan joined their ranks towards the end of the Qianlong reign. They had helped and influenced the direction of his intellectual development as well as the course of his political career, rather than the other way around. The greater number of these scholars, a few better known than others in their own right, on the other hand, had worked under Ruan Yuan. Who were these scholars? What were their independent achievements? How did they come to Ruan Yuan's attention and what was the nature of their association? Why did they work with him? How were they compensated? How did they view their relationship?

Furthermore, how many of Ruan Yuan's scholarly works and his government papers as well, did Ruan Yuan actually research and write himself, and how many were the work of the scholars around him? How did Ruan Yuan manage these assignments? Under what circumstances did he choose to sign his name to what

34. YJSJ I:7.

35. YJSJ I:2. See also Foreword, *Guochao Hanxue Shichen Ji* (國朝漢學師承記), compiled by Jiang Fan.

works? How much credit did he give to others? How influential were Ruan Yuan and the scholars around him in the development of scholarship and learning of their time? How accurate were their understanding and interpretations of ancient texts? How open-minded were they? And, what is their significance in the historical context?

Answers to these questions cannot be contemplated by examining Ruan Yuan's writings alone. The lives and works of as many of the scholars that could be found, at least their biographies, informal writings, and correspondence with Ruan Yuan were investigated and considered. This is not a prosopographic study of a generation of mid-Qing scholars, but it was necessary to involve all of them in order to come to certain conclusions about Ruan Yuan.

To provide scholars who neither enjoyed official stipends nor private incomes while pursuing their research and writing was not a practice unique to China, nor was it a new phenomenon during the mid-Qing. Often, the individual patrons offering this support had been motivated by political considerations. Lynn Struve and Kent Guy have written on patronage of scholarship and learning of the Qing, albeit of an earlier era than Ruan Yuan's.³⁶ Struve has found that from roughly the 1680s through the 1710s, the Kangxi Emperor had commissioned major literary projects, including the *Ming History*, to legitimize the Qing rule, by using scholars who were not officials. This tradition was followed by the Qianlong Emperor in such monumental compilation tasks as the *Four Treasuries*, the subject of Guy's research.

Literary works were produced under the patronage of individual scholar-officials as well. The Xu Brothers of the Kangxi era, who had served as chief editors of several imperially commissioned compilations, maintained a retinue of scholars.³⁷ The most celebrated mid-Qing officials who were patrons of scholars were the Zhu Brothers, Bi Yuan and Ruan Yuan. Especially since, after the compilation of the *Four Treasuries*, imperial compilations were fewer in number, hence sponsorship by individual officials in the provinces became of increasing significance. These officials gave scholars positions among their personnel, in academic institutions, and an allowance or a stipend while working on the literary projects they sponsored, with Ruan Yuan's network by far the most extensive. Zhu Yun and Zhu Gui, for example, had on their staff at one time or another such eminent scholars as Zhang Xuecheng (1738–1801), Shao Jinhan (1743–1809), Hong Liangji (1746–1809), and Ruan Yuan. Guy observed that

36. Lynn Struve, 'The Hsü Brothers and Semi-Official Patronage of Scholars in the K'ang-hsi Period' (1982). R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries: Scholar and the State in Late Ch'ien-lung Era* (1987).

37. Struve, 'The Hsü Brothers', p. 231.

Although Chu's was the first group of this type of scholarly patronage to coalesce, such circles became a fairly common feature of the era's intellectual life. Among the most important successors of Chu's circle in this regard were the groups which Pi Yuan (Bi Yuan) formed in Shensi in the late 1770s, and the group Juan Yuan formed at the Hsueh-hai t'ang (Xuehaitang) in Canton in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The (Bi and Ruan) circles were more active in publication: Pi Yuan underwrote the publication of many monographs and critical editions, and Juan Yuan was responsible for the 1,400 volume compilation of classical commentary entitled Huang-Ch'ing Ching-chieh (Ch'ing period commentaries on the classics).³⁸

Wang Junyi recognized the importance this form of patronage to the development of scholarship and learning during the mid-Qing period.

Under the leadership of the central government, officials enthusiastically supported scholarly research. . . . Bi Yuan, Ruan Yuan, for example, had on their staffs a large number of scholars. They established academies and compiled books. Their activities of collecting books, compiling books, checking texts against ancient editions of printed books, made it fashionable to collect and create books. Under these circumstances, scholarship and learning developed during the mid-Qing era.³⁹

Influence of the Zhu Brothers and Bi Yuan

Ruan Yuan inherited this tradition of scholarship patronage directly from the Zhu Brothers and Bi Yuan. When Ruan Yuan first went to Beijing in 1786, he was taken into the Zhu circle. His first important official assignment was Director of Studies in Shandong (1793–5) when Bi Yuan was governor, and in this manner he became exposed to Bi's style of scholarly patronage. Bi became a friend of Ruan Yuan's father, so there was a great deal of social interchange as well. Bi was interested and knowledgeable in epigraphy, and had encouraged Ruan Yuan to take up a compilation project on ancient inscriptions found in Shandong. This encouragement from Bi had spurred Ruan Yuan on the way to becoming a patron to scholars. More than half a century in government service led Ruan Yuan to such areas as Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Guangxi, Yunnan, and Guizhou, where he engaged scholars in literary pursuits. Thus, his patronage was widespread. Through his wide interests as well as his more than adequate ability

38. Guy, *Emperor's Four Treasuries* (1987), p. 52. Guy did not seem to have included the group Ruan Yuan organized at the Gujing Jingshe in Hangzhou earlier. A number of scholars from this group had followed Ruan Yuan for more than forty years throughout his official life from the late 1790s to the late 1830s.

39. Wang Junyi (王俊義), 'Kang Qian Shengshi yu Qian Jia Xuepai' (康乾盛世與乾嘉學派) (1986), p. 349.

to identify quality of scholarship, he managed to bequeath works in all major areas of learning at that time.

Ruan Yuan provided opportunities for scholars to work in academic institutions or on literary projects, and often published their other works. Since he organized and directed the projects, from conceptualization to approval of the final draft, as well as finding the financing for the projects and organizing the scholars for detailed research and writing, his name was listed as author, compiler, or editor of these publications. Ruan Yuan, however, was always scrupulous in giving due credit to others, usually to be found in the preface of each work.

His government appointments in the provinces came with the authority to allocate public resources and to solicit private funding. Thus, Ruan Yuan was able to make decisions to sponsor academic and scholarly activities. With government affairs demanding his constant attention, however, the scholars were entrusted with the actual research and writing. For these tasks, he was able to draw from the large field of scholars he knew personally, who either did not pass the requisite examinations to qualify for government service, or who preferred not to accept an official appointment. His own home district, the Yangzhou and Jiangdu area, had enjoyed a long literary and intellectual tradition. Many of his chosen scholars hailed from his area and followed him throughout his career. From the provinces of Shandong and Zhejiang where the scholarly heritage was also strong, and where there existed a rich legacy of book collection, he was able to enlist further recruits.

Through his work as Director of Studies in Shandong and Zhejiang, and his position as Metropolitan Examination examiner in 1799, he could lay claim to a network of ‘students’ all over the country. In Zhejiang alone, for instance, as Director of Studies and later as Governor, Ruan Yuan discovered more than one hundred scholars. He appointed ninety-five of them to the Gujing Academy, and nominated sixty-three others as *xiaolian fangzheng* (孝廉方正), an honorary title enabling the holder to enjoy ‘a minor path of entry to official status and appointment to low-level posts, up to rank 6’.⁴⁰ Among these scholars who established personal association with Ruan Yuan were Zhu Weibi, Zhang Jian, Yang Fengbao, Hong Yixuan, Hong Zhengxuan, Yan Jie, who were to edit major literary projects, and Xu Naiji.⁴¹ Lyn Struve’s observation on the Xue Brothers

40. Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, No. 2419.

41. Xu attained to the metropolitan degree on his own later on, and became an official in Guangzhou in the 1830s. He was known in the historical context as the official who proposed the legalization of the opium trade to the Daoguang emperor, leading British authorities to believe, erroneously, that the idea had originally come from Ruan Yuan (see Chapter 12).

also applies to Ruan Yuan in that they used ‘the opportunities to serve as examiners for the most important capital and provincial examinations, through which they could develop networks of “student-teacher” relations among the most promising examinees in the country’.⁴²

How Ruan Yuan Managed Literary Production

Ruan Yuan himself told how he managed his time on literary production. He indicated in the preface of each work where the idea for it had originated. The subjects for his earlier works as a young Hanlin bachelor were given to him. He was assigned by senior scholars to work on the text of the *Commentary and Collation Notes for the Classic Yili* (*Yili Shijing Jiaokan Ji* 儀禮石經校勘記) and the imperial collection of paintings, *Notes on Paintings and Calligraphy in the Imperial Collection* (*Shiqu Suibi* 石渠隨筆).⁴³ *Biographies of Astronomers and Mathematicians* (*Chouren Zhuan* 疇人傳) had been suggested by Li Rui (李瑞 1765–1814). Nevertheless, in addition to the scholarship needed for such tasks, Ruan Yuan provided the direction and management for the compilations, leaving the actual research and writing to other scholars.

Compiling a book is different from actually writing a book. Before I became so heavily involved in government affairs, I wrote books, such as *Yili Shijing Jiaokanji* (儀禮石經校勘記, 1792), and the *Shiqu Suibi* (石渠隨筆, 1792), conducting the research and writing the text myself. Since I took on official responsibilities, works such as *Shangzuo Jinshi Zhi* (山左石志), *Jingji Xuangu* (經籍纂詁), and *Chouren Zhuan* (疇人傳) have been completed with other scholars shouldering the responsibility for research and writing.⁴⁴

Staff

Time constraint was not the only reason for seeking assistance from other scholars. There was no professional staff in the Qing bureaucracy, so each official in the provinces had to maintain a personal staff of a number of advisors and secretaries (*muyou* 幕友). These men were also scholars in the Chinese context, Confucian classical scholars with expertise in practical areas, such as taxation, law and punishment, and especially in Ruan Yuan’s case, coastal defence and internal security, and grain transportation. Ruan Yuan wrote on how his official paper work was handled:

42. Struve, ‘The Hsü Brothers’, p. 233. See also Man-Cheong, *Class of 1761* (2004) p. 172.

43. *Dingxiangting Bitan* 4: 1b–2.

44. *Dingxiangting Bitan* 4: 1b–2.

I remember that in the days (when we were working to eradicate piracy in Zhejiang), no correspondence, either memorials to the emperor, or instructions to the lower-level officials, was ever sent out without careful deliberations. I drafted a number of the correspondence myself; while others were drafted by members of my staff and revised by me.⁴⁵

Zhang Jian, one of his closest associates, revealed how Ruan Yuan worked on a book:

As a rule, Ruan Yuan organizes the compilation of a book by taking part personally in the conceptualization and outlining the content. Then he assigns to certain friends, or students, or younger members of his household, the task for detailed research and writing. He always revises their text with a red brush, rewriting again and again conscientiously. After he took on administrative responsibilities in the provinces, however, he has had very little leisure for such creative pastime. As a result, his literary energies have been expended on compilations which do not demand so much of his time.⁴⁶

Organization of Compilation

One scholar was always charged with the responsibilities for a major work as compiler-in-chief. For example, Zang Yongtang (臧鏞堂 1767–76) was responsible for the *Dictionary*, Jiang Fan (江藩 1761–1831) for *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Guangdong*, and Yan Jie (嚴杰 1763–1843) for the *Huang Qing Jingjie*. Other scholars Ruan Yuan knew were often invited to join the projects, and in all cases, scholars in the locality were also employed. Before any work was printed, however, Ruan Yuan combed over the text with a critical eye, although he did slip up from time to time so errors remained. Scholars who took part in the compilations were acknowledged by name and native place.

An Example

An insight into how Ruan Yuan managed to publish *Jiguzhai Zhongding Yiqi Kuanshi* (積古齋鐘鼎彝器款識) may be gained from perusing a rough draft of the work printed in 1853. In the preface to the original edition, dated 1804, Ruan Yuan had listed twelve friends who had collections of ancient bronze vessels with inscriptions which they had found interesting. Rubbings had been taken and had been meticulously studied by the same friends. Their conclusions were gathered and published in this book, the title of which was to bear the name of

45. YZBT 1:4b. See also YJSJ II:8:8.

46. *Diziji* 1:19b.

Ruan Yuan's studio, the Jiguzhai (literally meaning the studio to amass antiquities). In the preface, Ruan Yuan had singled out Zhu Weibi (朱為弼 1771–1840) who was extremely fond of ancient inscriptions on bronzes. 'I gave him these rubbings (the individual collectors had made) for his further scrutiny.'⁴⁷ A draft of this manuscript had been among the Zhu family papers until the 1850s when it was printed by Zhu Weibi's great-grandson and great grandnephew under the same title. Apparently the younger generation had wished to show the scholarly world that this noted work had been written mostly by their ancestor at the behest of the much revered contemporary official and scholar, Ruan Yuan. In the preface of the printed draft, the Zhu boys wrote:

This is a draft of the manuscript of *Jiguzhai Zhongding Yiqi Kuanshi* with editorial changes made by our ancestor and Ruan Yuan. Ruan Yuan had discovered a Song dynasty work on identification of ancient inscriptions, and had wanted to have his friends' identifications of the inscriptions on the vessels in their own collections investigated further. He had planned to have their findings prepared for publication in 1804 and had (in fact) written a preface. Subsequently, in 1807, our ancestor was at home mourning the death of his mother, so the task in getting this work ready for printing fell on him. The original manuscript is still in the family collection.⁴⁸

Scholars Associated with Ruan Yuan

By combing through all of Ruan Yuan's publications, as well as the published chronological biographies, biographical and bibliographical essays in English, French, German, and Japanese, numerous annotated catalogues of Qing publications; literally hundreds of biographies or biographical notes of Ruan Yuan's contemporaries who might have had an association with him; and as much of the writings by these scholars as I could locate, I have found more than four hundred scholars who were associated with Ruan Yuan. In compiling this list, I have included neither anyone whose association with Ruan Yuan appeared to be non-scholarly nor only incidental, no matter how prominent the individual might be in his own right. For instance, I have not included Commissioner Lin Zexu (林則徐 1785–1859) whose anti-opium programmes in the province of Guangdong were similar to those adopted by Ruan Yuan at an earlier date, and who was recorded to have received Ruan Yuan in Nanjing in the 1830s, and paid

47. The preface was dated 1804, but the work was not printed until later, in 1807 when the manuscript was finally acceptable to Ruan Yuan.

48. Preface of a work entitled *Jiguzhai Zhongding Yiqi Kuanshi* (積古齋鐘鼎彝器款識), printed in 1853. A copy is in the Fu Su-nian Library at the Academia Sinica in Taipei.

a courtesy call on Ruan Yuan in Yangzhou in 1840 or 1841 (see Chapter 12). Similarly, I have not included Ruan Yuan's many government colleagues.

Those individuals on this list shared with Ruan Yuan certain common interests in scholarly pursuits: such as the Classics and textual criticism, ancient inscriptions, phonetics, phonology, etymology, historiography, archaeology, history, geography, bibliography, astronomy, mathematics, statecraft, poetry, and calligraphy. Further, in a less expected area for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century China, they shared a concern for the environment. Ruan Yuan also had among his associates men with lesser scholarly attainments. In addition, there were relatives, fellow clansmen and townsmen, and other scholars recommended to him by such people as Zhu Gui and Bi Yuan. The list of scholars can be found in Appendix III.

Concluding Comments

Ruan Yuan's contributions to scholarship and learning of the mid-Qing were multi-faceted. He was engaged in all aspects of scholarship and learning, but, fundamentally, he considered 'concrete learning (*shixue* 實學)' to be the top priority, especially in contrast to 'idle speculations (*xuzhi* 虛智)'. In response to the foreword to a collection of farewell poems by scholars at the various academies in the provinces when he left Canton in 1826, Ruan Yuan wrote that in scholarship and learning, concrete knowledge is essential, while idle speculations could lead to a waste of time.⁴⁹ He further reiterated the theme to his son Ruan Fu in the preface to a collection of Classical essays for his sons to study.⁵⁰ It is clear, therefore, when we consider Ruan Yuan the scholar as distinct from Ruan Yuan the patron or collaborator of scholarly research, we need to see him fundamentally as a member of the School of Han Learning as in the tradition of the *Four Treasuries*.⁵¹

49. *Diziji* 6:12.

50. *Diziji* 6:12b See also *Yanjingshi Jiaozhi Wenji* (經室教子文集), Appendix IV.

51. See Li Chengliang (李成良), *Ruan Yuan Sixiang Yanjiu* (阮元思想研究) (1997), passim; see also Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology* (2001), p. 101.

PART FOUR

The Private Ruan Yuan

10

Son and Father: Man of the Confucian Persuasion

Upon achieving success as an official, Run Yuan took on certain responsibilities for his family and community, as expected in the Confucian persuasion. Beneficiaries included his parents, ancestors up to four generations, members of the Ruan clan individually and in general, and, through programmes such as compilation of gazetteers and building roads and bridges, the community of Yangzhou as well. A number of projects Ruan Yuan carried out, such as renovating the Ruan clan hall and glorification of the family cemetery, were dictated by tradition. Others, such as compilation of a new edition of the prefectural gazetteer and sponsoring publication of works by local writers, were done because they interested him. Despite high offices and several major moves from one post to another, Ruan Yuan kept his family life relatively uncomplicated by contemporary standards. As a high provincial official, however, his lifestyle had to be surrounded by the etiquette and embellishments that attended officialdom at that time.

Honours to the Ancestors

Family responsibilities included bringing honours and other, more tangible benefits, to his parents and ancestors. With the exception of his father, who died when Ruan Yuan was Governor of Zhejiang, all others received their honours and beneficence posthumously. Nevertheless, Ruan Yuan was given credit for being filial just the same. As a son in the Confucian tradition, he was to provide his parents with their needs and their wants, with sensitivity and reverence.¹ Since his mother had died in 1781, long before he began to embark on the ladder of success, all honours and awards accorded to her as a result of his attainments were posthumous. Foremost among these was the honorary title of Lady of the First Rank (*yipin furen* 一品夫人), granted by the Jiaqing Emperor in 1799.² As a

1. *Lunyu Jijie* (論語集解) 2:5a–b.

2. *Diziji* 2:7a–b.

result, it was possible for her spirit to command the stature of having a memorial tablet installed in the side chapel at the Queen of Heaven shrine in Yangzhou, converted from the house where Ruan Yuan was born. 'A few aged nuns were to attend constantly to the incense and offerings in front of the tablet,' her son ordered.³ Another way he honoured her memory was keeping vigil at her graveside whenever he could manage.⁴

Father

On the other hand, Ruan Yuan's father, Ruan Chengxin, who died in 1805, was able to enjoy fully the benefits of having sired such a successful son. The Ruan clan had been condescending towards this branch of the family, principally because the father had attained neither academic, monetary, nor any other kind of noticeable success. In middle age, he was forced to make a living away from Yangzhou working for his maternal uncle, leaving his wife and young son to cope the best they could much of the time. It was especially important for Ruan Chengxin to achieve the kind of financial security and social prestige that his lack of learning as much as his status as a minor businessman on the fringe of the salt trade had prevented him from enjoying in his own right. It must have brought him a great deal of satisfaction when he was asked by one of the foremost scholars-official of the day, Bi Yuan, to serve as 'go-between' (*meiren* 媒人) at the betrothal of Bi's daughter to a direct lineal descendant of Confucius, the incumbent Duke Yansheng.⁵ His cup must have been running over when his own son, Ruan Yuan, then Provincial Director of Studies in Shandong and a widower, was to marry the duke's sister.

The emperor granted the father the honorary first rank title of Grand Master of Splendid Happiness (*Guanglu dafu* 光祿大夫) in 1799.⁶ A special citation had announced essentially that 'the father of Ruan Yuan is honoured with the first rank title of *Guanglu Dafu* for his exemplary conduct in instilling in his son the desire and ability to serve the country'.⁷ Meaningless as the original wording

3. *Diziji* 1:15b.

4. The ritual of keeping graveside vigil is not in the classics, according to Zhao Yi (趙翼 1727–1814), who wrote that graveside ritual did not begin until the Qin-Han era. Vigil was kept by the graveside of emperors and kings so that sacrifices could be offered throughout the day. Eventually, this custom became popular. *Gaiyu Congkao* (陔餘叢考) 32:3b–5b.

5. *Diziji* 1:15b.

6. *Diziji* 1:23b.

7. *YJSJ* II:1:26.

might be, the glorious language of the citation, as much as the honorary title, did bring forth prestige as well as honour on the recipient for all to see. In Confucian terminology and reasoning, Ruan Yuan was filial indeed.

Ruan Yuan did not let occasions go by without giving credit to his father for his own achievements. From 1800 until his death in the summer of 1805, the father, Ruan Chengxin, lived with his son in Hangzhou where the latter was Governor. Ruan Yuan had given credit to his father with helping his government work. Ruan Chengxin, with his childhood spent in army camps, had considered himself knowledgeable in military matters. He was asked by his son to visit munitions factories and cannon foundries manufacturing weapons used in anti-piracy campaigns on the Zhejiang coast, thereby gaining a sense of satisfaction that he was doing his share in bringing peace and security in the region.⁸

Ruan Chengxin was shrewd in advising his son to take advantage of opportunities to flatter the Jiaqing Emperor. In the summer of 1800, Ruan Yuan's first year as a provincial official, a typhoon off the Zhejiang coast scattered a seemingly invincible pirate fleet. It also brought concrete evidence of Vietnamese involvement in coastal piracy when the Zhejiang local defence force organized by Ruan Yuan captured a leading Chinese pirate who held a commission issued by the Vietnamese government.⁹ The father persuaded Ruan Yuan not to claim credit for this victory for himself. Instead, he sent words of praise to the emperor, attributing this timely storm as a 'sign from the gods who were moved by the emperor's sincerity in bringing good governance to the people',¹⁰ thus pleasing the emperor tremendously.

Ruan Chengxin must have been gratified at being asked to join the ranks of the illustrious and wealthy salt merchants of the Zhejiang coast in contributing money to public works. He gave three thousand taels for the construction and maintenance of sea embankment in the County of Dinghai, an island off the Zhejiang coast at the mouth of the Qiantang estuary.¹¹ During severe flooding of areas in Eastern Zhejiang in 1805, shortly before his death, he was recorded to have initiated a programme of distributing gruel to the needy to tide them through the winter months that were to follow.¹² His own cash contribution

8. *YJSJ* II:1:27.

9. Memorial from Ruan Yuan, dated Jiaqing 5/7/21 (1800/9/9), in *YZBT* 2:8.

10. *YJSJ* II:1:30b.

11. *Diziji* 2:7. Sea embankment (*haitang* 海塘), carefully engineered pools along the coast to keep tides from rolling further inland, were also used to trap seawater to produce salt.

12. *YJSJ* II:2:7b.

for this charitable project was 14,000 taels, representing ‘my savings for many years’,¹³ in his own words. It was unlikely that he could have accumulated such a large amount of cash unless he had received commissions of business since his son began the climb up the official ladder, but there is no evidence to support this view. Nor was there any indication that his business had achieved any unprecedented success. Chances were that the money had come from Ruan Yuan’s income (including *yanglian*) as governor but he had credited the father with the contribution in order to enhance the latter’s stature.

One happy occasion for the father during these years was the celebration of his seventieth birthday held at the governor’s residence in Hangzhou in 1803. To congratulate the ‘ancient and venerated gentleman’ (*laotaiye* 老太爺) — the term itself alone already signified great respect — the father of Ruan Yuan, governor of the province and noted scholar, officials and scholars crowded the hall to wish him many happy returns of the day. Chinese tradition dictated that no invitations be sent to birthday feasts. Those who wished could come to pay respect (*baishou* 拜壽) on their own initiative, and stay for the festivities afterwards. The large number of people who came that day, however, was not treated to the customary Chinese opera performances or other mundane entertainment. Ruan Yuan’s friends and associates each presented to his father an essay or poem. Toasts were drunk from thirteen bronze vessels made during the Shang and Zhou eras.¹⁴

Two other gifts were noteworthy. The emperor gave him a sceptre (*ruyi* 如意).¹⁵ Ruan Yuan’s gift to his father comprised reproductions of two ancient bronze bells cast in the Zhou style, complete with inscriptions.¹⁶ In giving his father these bells, Ruan Yuan wrote:

I have the audacity to present to you these two bells on your seventieth birthday, fully expecting that the sound of these bells will be heard by Ruan descendants until the end of time.¹⁷

This sentiment, too, represented a manifestation of filial piety. As he was the only child of his father, it was his responsibility to provide the father with progeny. ‘There are three things which are unfilial, and the gravest of them is to have no

13. *YJS*/II:1:31.

14. *YJS*/II:1:31.

15. *YJS*/II:1:31.

16. *YZBT* 6:16.

17. *YZBT* 6:16.

posterity,'¹⁸ Mencius had written. By then, Ruan Yuan had two sons already, not including Ruan Changsheng, whom he adopted in 1793. Therefore, he was secure in the feeling that his father did not need to worry about lacking descendants, and was saved from having to commit the gravest of unfilial acts in Confucian terms.

Ruan Family Shrine

It was at this time, when the father was anticipating to become an octogenarian, that his thoughts, and, as a result Ruan Yuan's also, turned towards posterity. There had been no space at Leitang to inter Ruan Yuan's first wife when she died in 1793. Whatever land that was available for purchase was acquired by Ruan Yuan to enlarge the Ruan grave site in 1804.¹⁹ The father was buried at Leitang when he died in 1805, next to the tomb of Ruan Yuan's mother. Even then, the cemetery was not spacious. Sufficient land was reserved for Ruan Yuan's own tomb after his death in 1849, and his second wife, Kong Luhua, who had died sixteen years earlier, was buried in the same tomb. 'My first wife was buried forty *li* away. As we had no money at the time of her death, the coffin we could afford was of inferior material. It cannot possibly withstand being moved,'²⁰ was the reason given by Ruan Yuan for not disinterring his first wife and transferring her remains to Leitang. Perhaps this was the real reason. Perhaps there was no space for the remains of both wives, as well as that of Ruan Yuan himself. In leaving his first wife where she was, Ruan Yuan was paying tribute to Kong Luhua, who was a descendant of Confucius, and who was the wife of Ruan Yuan the high official, whereas the first wife was only that of a poor young scholar. In any case, Ruan Yuan's later achievements made it possible for the approaches to the Ruan cemetery at Leitang to boast an avenue of stone horses and guardians, in evidence still in 1949, a century after Ruan Yuan's death.²¹

18. As translated in William Theodore DeBary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (1960) I, p.98.

19. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 2:27. There is a Ruan family lended on the purchase of this lot of land. Apparently the lot Ruan Yuan wanted was owned by a man who hawked hot meat-buns (*rebaizi* 熱飽子) for a living. Stubbornly, the man refused to sell the land. Ruan Yuan sent people to buy up all the buns the man made every day. When the man increased his production, Ruan Yuan bought them all just the same. When business became so good and the bun seller began to have more cash than he could spend, he discovered that Ruan Yuan was the source of his fortune. Feeling extremely grateful, he sold Ruan Yuan the land at Leitang. Letter from Juan Xixiang dated May 1978, Taipei.

20. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 2:27.

21. Letter from Ruan Xixiang.

Finding Ruan Yuan's Grave in 1983

A few words must be added here regarding Ruan Yuan's grave at Leitang. After 1949 the area was overgrown with weeds. In 1983 Leitang became a part of a rural commune that made bricks. When several mounds were discovered not far from the brick ovens, local children went exploring. They found a tomb with a coffin intact. Inside the coffin there was a skeleton. Also found were a red bead of the variety worn by first rank officials on their hats, as well as a strand of beads worn by officials over their court dresses. The archaeologists of the locality learned the discovery, and immediately interfered, suspecting that it was Ruan Yuan's grave. Subsequently an epitaph carved on white sandstone found inside the grave proved beyond any doubt that this was Ruan Yuan's resting place. Today, only three graves are extant. In addition to Ruan Yuan's, the others contained the remains of Ruan Yuan's grandfather and father. In front of the father's grave, the stone horses erected by Ruan Yuan still stand.

Soon after his seventieth birthday celebrations Ruan Yuan's father began to focus his attention on erecting a grass hut (*mulu* 墓廬) to facilitate graveside sacrifices at Leitang and a family shrine (*jiamiao* 家廟) in downtown Yangzhou to house the ancestral tablets. Actually, there was already in existence a Ruan clan temple (*zuci* 族祠), more commonly known as clan hall (*citang* 祠堂) at Gongdao Bridge, thirty *li* northwest to the then centre of the city.²² There were 'many clan members living near the bridge, and a number of Ruan graves,'²³ Ruan Yuan's father was recorded to have said to his son. The clan temple housed tablets of all deceased male ancestors, including those who were only distantly related by Ruan Yuan's time. The family temple, on the other hand, was to house tablets of four generations of direct lineal ancestors of Ruan Yuan. It was much more private and personal in comparison with the clan temple.

Chinese Tradition of Family Shrines

Since the Han era, officials who had attained to the third rank or higher had private family temples built as dwelling places for their ancestral tablets.²⁴ Such a family temple, built immediately to the east of the family residence, would give the official status and recognition in his home community. Ruan Yuan's father wanted to build this family temple to reflect his son's, and therefore his, achievements, which were considerably higher than any attained by their ancestors or other branches of the clan.

22. *YJSJ* II:2:3b–4.

23. *YZBT* 6:17.

24. Zhao Yi, 32:19b–20b.

Glory to the Father

In 1804 the father was already the holder of an honorary first rank title, granted by the Jiaqing Emperor in 1799. His own father, a military metropolitan graduate and a military official of the Kangxi and Qianlong reigns, as well as three generations above, all held posthumous honorary military titles of the third rank. Therefore, the father directed Ruan Yuan to build a family shrine in downtown Yangzhou. 'Are you aware that the *Collected Statutes* as well as ancient ritual laws require that all officials from the third rank up construct family temples?'²⁵ Following his father's wishes, Ruan Yuan chose a site on Wenxuan Lane, sometimes referred to by Ruan Yuan as Wenxuan Street (*jie* 街), where an ancient Sui dynasty edifice, Wenxuan Pavilion (*lou* 樓), was said to have stood. On the site was supposed to be the residence of a noted local literary figure, Cao Xian (曹憲), of the Sui dynasty as well.²⁶ On this site Ruan Yuan built a house for himself, naming it after the Sui edifice. East of this house, Ruan Yuan built the family shrine, into whose hallowed halls were to go the wooden tablets embodying four generations of ancestral spirits.²⁷

Ruan Yuan in Mourning

In the summer of 1805 the temple was finished. Ruan Yuan was visiting Wu Shan (吳山), a mountain of religious significance outside Hangzhou. Ruan Chengxin was in the process of selecting an auspicious date for escorting the tablets of his great-grandfather, grandfather, and father to Yangzhou. The old man had not been in good health, suffering from rheumatism, but, until then, he was still able to go horseback riding. As the weather became hotter and more humid, he had developed shingles, with a loss of appetite. His left leg suffered paralysis. Ruan Yuan was hoping to dissuade his father from travelling to Yangzhou with the ancestral tablets until the weather was cooler, but was comforted by the thought that the father would be able to visit a well-known physician in Suzhou, which was on the way. Ruan Chengxin was planning to go by boat up the Grand Canal to Yangzhou and stop at Suzhou on the way. On 9 August 1805, his physical condition deteriorated. He sent the tablets by his grandson and died.²⁸

25. *Qing Huidian* QL50:4b; *Diziji* 2: 29a–b.

26. *YZBT* 6:31b–32.

27. These tablets, known as *lizhu* (栗主), literally meaning 'host residing in chestnut wood' because originally ancestral tablets were made from wood of the chestnut tree. I am grateful to Professor Kong Decheng for this information. The Chinese believed that the availability of this host for the spirit to reside enables the dead to become a spirit (*shen* 神), as distinct from a wandering ghost (*gui* 鬼).

28. *YJSJ* II: 1:31–32b.

Immediately, Ruan Yuan sent a memorial to the emperor requesting a leave of absence, and brought his father's remains to Yangzhou. There, freed from official responsibilities for the next twenty-seven months as he observed the statutory period of mourning, he was able to accomplish a great deal. He renovated the Ruan clan temple at Gongdao Bridge. He built a clan school nearby, and another school on Wenxuan Lane. Thus, learning was accessible to all male children 'of ability'²⁹ of the Ruan clan. Grass huts were built by the side of the Ruan graves at Gongdao Bridge and at Leitang, in order for the descendants to keep graveside vigils and to make graveside offerings. These huts could also serve as residences for members of the clan who chose to come, or who could not afford to keep homes of their own. Expenses were to be paid out of revenue from the fields south of the Ruan cemetery at Gongdao Bridge, land that had been in the clan since the days of their first settlement in the locality during the Ming. To supplement this revenue, Ruan Yuan bought a number of islets in the Yangzi River off Yangzhou. These islets produced reeds (*luwei* 蘆葦), which, when dried, were a major source of fuel in this region.³⁰ Stipends were also endowed to provide candidates of the Ruan clan preparing for metropolitan examinations with subsidies for travelling and living expenses.³¹

Literary and Architectural Accomplishments

During this period Ruan Yuan finished several literary and personal projects he had planned. He completed and printed his own *Collation Notes on the Thirteen Classics*. He also wrote annotations for *Informal Notes from the Weiyu Studio* (*Weiyu Shuwu Suibi* 味餘書屋隨筆), essays and poems written by Jiaqing before he ascended the throne.³² He built the Wenxuan Pavilion, and named it after the Sui and then Tang edifices that were reputed to have stood at the site on Wenxuan Lane.³³ There he began to collect what turned out to be a considerable library, as well as ancient bronze objects. It was also during this period that he began to plan for the establishment of a major library at a monastery on Jiaoshan (焦山), an island in the Yangzi River between Zhenjiang and Yangzhou. This library, not built until much later, was to be similar to the library he was planning to establish at the monastery Lingyin on the shore of the West Lake in Hangzhou.³⁴ Until his studio at Wenxuan Pavilion was completed, he worked at the grass hut at Leitang.

29. *YJSJ* II: 1:30b.

30. *Diziji* 2:30b. These islets were still in the Ruan family as late as 1949, according to Ruan Xixiang.

31. *YJSJ*, additional supplement, 2:42b–43b.

32. *Diziji* 2:32b.

33. *YJSJ* II:2:15b.

34. *Diziji* 2:32b.

As a result, he gave himself the *hao* (號) Master of the Hut at Leitang (Leitang anzhu 雷塘庵主).

Wenxuan Pavilion, like many private dwellings of the lower Yangzi region, was a two-storied building surrounded by a wall. The wall here, however, was low, so that passer-by could also enjoy the plants and flowers inside. One of Ruan Yuan’s favourite places here was the small courtyard garden in the front. There were rockeries and trees, and a variety of flowers that bloomed at different times of the year. The plants and trees were grown in ceramic pots in the Chinese tradition, and placed in the courtyard garden only when they were in bloom, giving the impression that the garden was perpetually full of flowers. ‘Although there was no lotus for lack of a pond, this disappointment was more than alleviated by the bamboo, peach and plum trees, cloves, orchids, begonias, peonies, chrysanthemums, and quince that bloomed intermittently during different seasons.’³⁵ Ruan Yuan’s particular pride and joy was a peony bush that boasted more than ‘three hundred deep pink blossoms, bringing spring time onto the street for all to share in its splendour.’³⁶

Ruan Yuan’s Descendants

Ruan Yuan had seven children, including Ruan Changsheng and two who did not live beyond infancy. Perhaps because he was an only child, he chose to adopt the system of including the children, male and female, of his cousins as well in determining their seniority by order of their births. This system, quite common in Qing China, was called *da pai hang* (大排行).³⁷ As a result, Ruan Fu, Ruan Yuan’s second son, was sometimes referred as his ‘fifth’ son; and daughter An, as

Table 10.1 Ruan Yuan’s family

Name of Child	Mother
Changsheng (常生 1790? –1833)	Adopted 1793
Fu (福, b. 1802)	Xie Xue (謝雪)
♀ An (安, 1802–21) (Kongjing 孔靜)	Kong Luhua (孔璐華)
Kai (凱, d. 1804) Konghou (孔厚, b 1805) (original names Yi, 禕)	
Hu (祜, b. 1804)	Liu Wenru (劉文如)
♀ Zheng (正, b. 1809)	

(showing children who survived adulthood; their dates of birth and death, if they predeceased their father; and the names of the mothers)

35. *Draft Poems* 3:13.
36. *Draft Poems* 3:13b.
37. *Diziji* 7:11.

the ‘sixth’ daughter; thus leading to considerable confusion for readers of his private papers.

Ruan arranged marriages for his sons to women whose fathers or grandfathers were scholars or scholar-officials he respected.

Table 10.2 Ruan Yuan’s daughters-in-law

Son	Wife	Father/Grandfather* of wife
Changsheng	Liu Fanyong (劉繁榮)	Liu Duanlin (劉端臨, 1791–1855), scholar from Baoying (寶應)
Fu	Xu Yanjing (許延經)	Xu Zongyan (許宗彥, 1768–1819), scholar-official, served on Board of War; <i>jinshi</i> 1799
Hu	Qian Derong (錢德容)	Qian Kaishi, scholar-official, served as Governor of Anhui; <i>jinshi</i> 1789
Konghou	Peng (彭, no first name given)	* Peng Yuanrui (1731–1803), scholar-official, President of Board of Civil Appointments (1789–1791); <i>jinshi</i> (1757)

Ruan Yuan’s Progeny

Ruan Yuan had four sons and left a large number of descendants. With two wives and three concubines, this number did not seem to be excessive. It was the sons, each with wives, concubines, and children, who swelled the Ruan line. The grandchildren, in turn, had wives, concubines, and children. At the time of Ruan Yuan’s death in 1849, there were already numerous descendants. Excluding daughters, but including the sons of Changsheng, Ruan Yuan had twenty grandchildren whose births were recorded in *Diziji* (see Appendix IB). The births of twenty-one great-grandchildren were also recorded, but the figures do not necessarily represent the true number of the grandchildren as those born after 1849 had not been recorded in *Diziji*. In any case, the sons, their wives and concubines, their sons, wives, and concubines, and their children, probably one hundred or so individuals not counting household staff, lived under the same roof after Ruan Yuan’s retirement in 1838.³⁸

38. This compound, surrounding the family shrine at Wenxuan Lane, still stands. The shrine has been turned into living quarters for the local cadres after 1949. Wang Yigong revealed that some of the buildings had been destroyed by fire, including Ruan Yuan’s study, the much cherished Wenxuanlou, in 1935. The destroyed parts have been rebuilt. When I visited it last in 1988, the building was in excellent condition, the inside walls boasted a fresh coat of white paint. Still, judging by the size of the houses, living conditions had to have been crowded for the old scholar official. Ruan Yuan had another home but it was destroyed by fire in 1843, so he moved to Wenxuan Lane. See *Diziji* 5. The City of Yangzhou renamed the lane Street of the Grand Tutor, to honour Ruan after his death in 1849.

Table 10.3 Ruan Yuan's grandchildren and great-grandchildren from Changsheng

Enhai (恩海, b. 1817)	♀ Yingchuan (穎傳) ♀ Xiuchuan (秀傳) Songchuan (嵩傳) Shuchuan (淑傳) ♀ Jingchuan (靜傳) Twins: Shuangchuan (雙傳) and ♀ Ochuan (耦傳)
Enhong (恩洪, b. 1819)	Taichuan (泰傳)
Enhao (恩浩, b. 1820)	Maochuan (茂傳) Yichuan (懿傳) ♀ Tongchuan (潼傳) Fanchuan (蕃傳) ♀ Huachuan (華傳)
♀ Enluan (恩瀾, 1823–1854)	
Enchou (恩疇, b. 1823)	♀ Ruichuan (瑞傳)
Enyin (恩瀛, d. 1823)	
Enxi (恩喜, b. 1830)	
♀ Ensheng (恩紳, b. 1831)	

Table 10.4 Ruan Yuan's grandchildren and great-grandchildren from Ruan Fu

Enchao (恩朝, b. 1819)	
Enguang (恩光, b. 1821)	Jingchuan (覲傳) Huichuan (惠傳) Xinchuan (薪傳) Yinchuan (引傳) ♀ Yongchuan (泳傳)
Enshan (恩山, b. 1822)	
Ennian (恩年, b. 1839)	

Table 10.5 Ruan Yuan's grandchildren and great-grandchildren from Hu

Enliang (恩亮, b. 1836)	
Enyan (恩延, b. 1837)	

Table 10.6 Ruan Yuan's grandchildren and great-grandchildren from Konghou

Enlai (恩來, b. 1827)	♀ Fuchuan (富傳) ♀ Fachuan (發傳)
♀ Engui (恩桂, b. 1831)	
Engao (恩高, b. 1831)	
Enqin (恩勤, b. 1836)	
Engong (恩功, b. 1837)	
Enshou (恩壽, b. 1840)	

Attaining Offices without Passing Examinations

Caring fathers everywhere, especially those in a position to do so, help their sons in the advancement of their education and careers. For a father of the Confucian persuasion, it was his responsibility to educate the sons. There were two methods by which Chinese sons and grandsons of high officials in Ruan Yuan's time could be appointed to government offices without having to pass the requisite examinations themselves. One way was through the granting of the *yin* (蔭) privilege. Another way was the *juanna* (捐納), through purchasing a relevant degree. Chang Chung-li, in his study of the Chinese gentry, found that 'contemporary regulations provided that (the *yin* privilege) could be bestowed for one generation only on one son of the civil and military officials in the capital who were fourth rank or above, civil officials in the provinces who were third rank or above, and military officers in the provinces who were second rank or above'.³⁹

Although the fact that various sons of Ruan Yuan had taken examinations in Yangzhou was recorded in the *Diziji*, no mention was made of any of them having passed any of these examinations. Strictly speaking, none of Ruan Yuan's sons passed the civil service examinations on their own merits the way their father had. Chang Chung-li had found further that 'the exercise of this favour (of granting the *yin* privilege) must have been a matter of imperial discretion',⁴⁰ since from time to time more than one son of an official could benefit from this system. Two of Ruan Yuan's sons were granted the *yin* privilege. Ruan Changsheng was made an 'honorary licentiate by imperial favour' (*enyin sheng* 恩蔭生) in 1796. The other was Konghou, whose mother was Kong Luhua.

Ruan Changsheng and Adoption

In 1793, the joys of sons and grandsons had not yet appeared on the horizon when Ruan Yuan was approaching thirty. It was after the death of Ruan's first wife that his father deemed it wise for him to take Liu Wenru, who was then sixteen and already in the household, as a concubine. Ruan Yuan also adopted as his heir a boy from the Ruan clan. It was essential to adopt from a 'general category of people related patrilineally (in order to ensure) the continuation of the family line'.⁴¹ This young boy, Ruan Changsheng, must have been in robust

39. Chang, *The Chinese Gentry*, p. 13.

40. Chang, *The Chinese Gentry*, p. 14.

41. James L. Watson, 'Agnates and Outsiders: Adoption in a Chinese Lineage' (1975), *Man* 10: 293–306.

health and under six at that time. He was ‘of pleasant personality and a great favourite of Ruan Yuan’s’.⁴²

Ruan Changsheng was made an honorary licentiate at the same time Ruan Yuan’s parents received their honorary titles.⁴³ There was no information on what he did except that he was taught by Ling Tingkan, a scholar around Ruan Yuan. In the summer of 1817, he was made a secretary (*zhushi* 主事) in the Board of Revenue. The fact that this appointment had come shortly after Ruan Yuan’s trip to Beijing could mean that the father had done something to speed up the son’s career. In 1821 Changsheng became a proofreader in the Office of the Veritable Records (*Shilu guan* 實錄館) before being sent to Shandong as an agent of the Board of Revenue.⁴⁴ In 1824 he was considered ready to take on a provincial assignment and had an audience before the emperor.⁴⁵ He was offered several posts but had to refuse due to concerns over the issue of conflict of interests because his father had worked in the area.⁴⁶ Finally he was appointed to positions in the provinces.

At the time of his death in May 1833, Ruan Changsheng was concurrently Prefect of the Prefectures of Yunping (永平) and Baoding (保定), and, because the prefect was also the judicial official in the prefectures, he was also serving as a provincial judge.⁴⁷ Changsheng’s death was caused by taking the wrong medication. Ruan Yuan was emerging from reading the papers of the Metropolitan Examination in Beijing when he received the news in June. He was ‘physically and spiritually broken’,⁴⁸ especially since he had just heard the news of the death of his wife in Kunming. He stopped at Baoding Fu to arrange for the transportation of his son’s remains and his family back to Yangzhou. He continued to support the family throughout the rest of his life.

Ruan Fu and Ruan Hu

Ruan Yuan had to buy his other sons status through the *juanna* system to enable them to be eligible for office. Through this system, degrees could be purchased by individuals, entitling the holder to certain appointments to offices equivalent

42. Biography of Ruan Changsheng in *Diziji* 8. In 1796 he was recorded to be nine *sui*, hence was born in 1788 or 1789.

43. *Diziji* 1:17.

44. *Diziji* 5:22b–23.

45. *Diziji* 6:5.

46. *Diziji* 8:6–8b.

47. *Diziji* 7: 6–7b.

48. *Diziji* 7:14b.

to the rank purchased. Ruan Yuan purchased the rank of department director (*langzhong* 郎中) for his sons Ruan Fu and Ruan Hu in 1827.⁴⁹ Apparently both Ruan Fu and Ruan Hu held actual offices and had had their appointments ratified by the emperor, for the memorials reflecting their biodata — native place, age, and office — are extant in the First Historical Archives in Beijing.⁵⁰

Ruan Fu had several imperial audiences, but the first time he saw Daoguang was the most noteworthy. He was working as a department head in the Board of Revenue in Beijing 1846 when he was called to the emperor's study. At first he was one of a group of officials received by the emperor. A few days later, the emperor called him again, this time appointing him as a magistrate in Gansu. When Ruan Yuan died Ruan Fu was away from home. After he finished observing the period of mourning, he reported to work again. This time the audience was granted by the Xianfeng Emperor. He was identified as a 'former' Prefect of Pingliang (平涼) in Gansu, being transferred to Yichang (宜昌) Prefecture in Hubei.⁵¹

Ruan Hu served in several posts at the capital with the purchased rank, including one at the Board of Revenue in 1843.⁵² Before his father's death, he managed to pass a special examination held in Beijing in 1842 and became a provincial graduate.⁵³ Under special circumstances, a small number of first degree holders who had not passed the provincial examinations 'could be recommended for a special examination in the capital whereupon they could be appointed as officials, but of lower rank than the metropolitan graduates'.⁵⁴ In an imperial rescript, the Xianfeng Emperor appointed him Prefect of Tongchuan Prefecture (潼川府) in Sichuan. 'Ruan Hu of the County of Yizheng in the Prefecture of Yangzhou, fifty *sui*, a department director in the Board of Punishment who had attained to his official rank by purchase, is marked by the Daoguang Emperor for appointment when there is a vacancy. There is one now. Let us use him — hence the imperial audience.'⁵⁵

49. *Diziji* 6:17b.

50. Palace Memorials Collection (*gongzhong dangan* 宮中檔案), Imperial Audience Records (*Yingjian Zhe* 引見摺) at the First Historical Archives in Beijing: #383 for Ruan Fu, and #378 for Ruan Hu. There are ten documents on Ruan Fu, eight each on Ruan Hu, Ruan Yuan's grandson Enguang (恩光) and great-grandson Yinchuan (引傳).

51. Memorial dated XF3/7/26 (1853/9/9).

52. *Diziji* 8:11b.

53. *Diziji* 8:23.

54. Wolfgang Franke, *The Reform and Abolition of the Traditional Chinese Examination System*, p. 11.

55. Palace Memorials Collection (*gongzhong dan an* 宮中檔案), Imperial Audience Records (*Yingjian Zhe* 引見摺), #378/8 and 10, dated Xianfeng 3/2/28 (1852/4/7), at First Historical Archives in Beijing.

In order to be eligible for this special examination, Ruan Yuan had to pay another instalment of the purchase price. In one of the informal notes Ruan Yuan wrote after his retirement, he noted that he had just received a message from Beijing that all instalment of the purchase price for Hu's office must be paid. There were two instalments 'one thousand taels in the sixth month and six hundred in the seventh. These deadlines cannot be missed',⁵⁶ stressed Ruan Yuan.

Ruan Konghou

Ruan Konghou's mother was Kong Luhua, so he was also a descendant of Confucius. Chronologically he was the youngest son of Ruan Yuan. Perhaps this was the reason he did not seem to have held any actual office, so that he could stay close to his parents and 'take care' of them. The only information on him appeared in his mother's biography.⁵⁷ In 1821 Konghou was made an honorary licentiate through the *yin* privilege. It was specified in the *Diziji* that he was able to obtain this privilege because he was a son of a high official and his principal wife, notwithstanding the fact that his mother was a direct descendant of Confucius.⁵⁸

Ruan Enguang and Ruan Yinchuan

Two more descendants of Ruan Yuan's are reflected in the Qing archives. One grandson, Ruan Enguang (阮恩光, b. 1821), son of Ruan Fu, held the rank of a subprefectural magistrate (*tongzhi* 同知) when he was appointed in 1853 at the age of thirty-two to be magistrate of Anping (安平府).⁵⁹ His son, Yinchuan (引傳), spent six years studying at a school overseen by the Directorate of Education (*guozijian* 國子監) and was appointed to the post of magistrate of Qi County (祁縣), in Taiyuan Prefecture (太原府), Shanxi (山西) in 1883.⁶⁰

56. These informal notes to members of his family are in the rare book collection of the Beijing Library. Ruan Yuan signed these notes Xin xu (心肅). He gave the date and time of the writing, but not the year.

57. *Diziji* 7:11.

58. *Diziji* 5: 22b. See also Ho Ping-ti, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China* (1962), pp. 149–53, for examples of more than one son benefiting.

59. Imperial Audience Records #1686/8 dated XF3/11/28 (1853/12/28).

60. Imperial Audience Records #1743/8 dated Guangxu 9/11/28 (1883/12/27).

Ruan Yuan's Cousin Ruan Heng

No account of the male members of Ruan Yuan's family and household can be complete without at least a mention of his cousin, Ruan Heng (阮亨 1776–1851). Ruan Heng was a distant cousin who was adopted to be the heir of a half-brother of Ruan Yuan's father, a Ruan Chengyi (阮成義) who had died at the age of twenty *sui* without issue (see Appendix IA). Therefore, he became a first cousin to Ruan Yuan, a very close personal relationship indeed for the two only children. Ruan Heng, a senior licentiate (*fu gong sheng* 附貢生) who did not succeed in passing the provincial examination, but had sufficient literary accomplishment to serve on his cousin's staff all his life. His collection of his cousin's personal and professional papers, *Yingzhou Bitan* (瀛舟筆談), is a rich source for research on Ruan Yuan. He also served as chief compiler of *Wenxuanlou Congshu* (文選樓叢書), a collection which comprised fourteen works by Ruan Yuan and an equal number of works by scholars around him, including Jiao Xun, Qian Daxin, and Ling Tingkan, published under the imprint of Ruan Yuan's studio in Yangzhou. From Ruan Yuan's informal notes written during his old age, it is clear that Ruan Heng managed his cousin's personal affairs as well.

Concluding Comments

By yardsticks of any era, Ruan Yuan served his parents well. He took good care of his father, the only one among his ancestors to benefit from his son's successes while living. His mother and other progenitors enjoyed their glories posthumously. Still, it was important in the Confucian persuasion that their spirits did reflect from Ruan Yuan's glory. The sons, on the other hand, did not need to struggle materially or spiritually as their father. They were born in privileged circumstances. All doors were open to them because of their father's political and scholarly attainments, and, in the social sense, their mother's being a descendant of Confucius. She was also the elder sister of the sitting Duke Yansheng. In any case, the sons were well educated in the classics, and were able to hold offices of their own.

11

The Women in Ruan Yuan's Life

Despite popular claim that traditional Chinese society deemed a woman 'virtuous' (*de* 德) only when she was without 'talents' (*cai* 才), respectable women in gentry families had been educated in the classics throughout the ages. This fact was especially evident during the mid-Qing when publication of works by women proliferated. The women in the immediate family of Ruan Yuan can be used as examples to personalize 'talented' (educated) women in the mid-Qing. Topics to be noted here include marriage, concubinage, adoption, and female suicide. I have already touched upon how his mother moulded the personality of Ruan Yuan and here I am going to show how he nurtured the intellectual development of the other women in his life. Still, despite intellectual enlightenment, the women were willing to keep to their 'assigned places' in society — in the inner chamber and as members of a harem. My premise remains that the issue must be looked at within the parameter of the Confucian tradition since Ruan Yuan was a man of the Confucian persuasion.

Secondary Literature

Liang Yizhen (梁乙真), a scholar in Shanghai who in 1924 compiled a work on women writers of the Qing era, devoted an entire chapter entitled 'Ruan Yuan and his relationship with women writers'.¹ Impressive as this attribution indeed was, perusal of the chapter shows that Liang named only five poets known to Ruan Yuan. One was Ruan's concubine, and another his granddaughter. The other three were women on whose works Ruan had made polite comments. His second wife, Kong Luhua, who had a volume of poems printed in 1815 and whose essays on the classics are recorded in the local gazetteer of Yangzhou, was not even mentioned. Liang also wrote that the mid-Qing period marked 'the

1. Liang Yizhen, *Qingdai Funu Wenxueshi* (清代婦女文學史) (1968), pp. 146–54.

golden age of literary achievements by women'.² This is where she could have expanded further Ruan Yuan's contributions as he had included women's works in his anthologies of Zhejiang poetry. For instance, in *Poetry and Poets of Zhejiang* (*Liangzhe Youxuan Lu* 兩浙輶軒錄), comprising 9,241 poems by 3,133 poets, Ruan Yuan had included 381 poems by 183 women. He printed poetry from other areas as well, including his native Yangzhou and environs, *Poetry of Jiangsu* (*Jiangsu Shizhen* 江蘇詩徵) and *Poetry of Yangzhou* (*Guanglin Shishi* 廣林詩事). In each anthology he devoted at least one chapter to women writers.

Studies on Qing women writers compiled by Chinese scholars, including that by Liang Yizheng, are noteworthy. They are especially useful for today's scholars focusing their research on feminist scholarship and gender relations. Liang states that although women of the Qing era did not write better than earlier women poets, their environment 'was more congenial',³ meaning that more women's works were published. While Liang commented on three hundred women poets, Shi Shuyi (施淑儀), in *Poets of the Inner Chamber during the Qing Era* (*Qingdai Guike Shiren Zhenglue* 清代閨閣詩人徵略), gave brief biographical data for more than 1,200 women poets. Han Shiqiu, in *History of Literature of the Qing Era* (*Qingdai Wenxueshi* 清代文學史), wrote that 'more than 400 women of the Qing era had left their own volumes of poetry in print'.⁴ In numbers alone, these findings are already impressive, but they are more than overshadowed by a later work. Hu Wenkai's *Study of Works by Women Throughout the Ages* (*Lidai Funu Zhuzuo kao* 歷代婦女著作考) listed four thousand women writers, nearly three thousand of whom were from the Qing era.⁵

As can be seen from the large number of writers, educating gentry women in the early nineteenth century beyond elementary reading and writing was not unique to the Ruan household. Besides poetry, the most common genre evidencing their scholarship, the women have left writings in prose, including essays on the classics, history, and textual criticism, calligraphy, as well as paintings, all attainments within the context of Confucian scholarship. Educating women, however, did not enjoy universal support. In his study on Chen Hongmou, William T. Rowe found that

Among eighteenth-century male literati (exemplified by Zhang Xuecheng) this (the advocacy of women literacy) raised all sorts of red flags about the subversiveness of literate women moving outside the proper confines of the home.⁶

2. Liang Yizheng, p. 146.

3. Liang Yizheng, p. 146.

4. Han Shiqiu (韓石秋), *Qingdai Wenxueshi* (清代文學史) (1973), p. 122.

5. Hu Wenkai (胡文楷), *Lidai Funu Zhuzuo kao* (歷代婦女著作考) (1957).

6. William T. Rowe, 'Women and the Family in Mid-Qing Social Thought', *Late Imperial China* 13:2 (1992), p. 28.

Among Western scholars who have observed Ruan Yuan to be sympathetic to educating women is Susan Mann, who wrote that 'Juan (Ruan) Yuan himself is known to have taken a personal interest in the education and training of his own daughters.'⁷ The facts are that Ruan Yuan had two daughters who survived infancy. The education of one of them, Ruan An (安 1802–21), is documented in an essay by her father and several poems by her mother. Nothing is known about the other daughter, Ruan Zheng (正, b. 1809), except for a notation of her marriage in Ruan Yuan's chronological biography, *Diziji*. There is a further mention of her husband, indicating that he was serving as a prefect in Shandong at the time of the death of his mother-in-law. Ruan Yuan must have educated Ruan Zheng as well, especially since her mother was Liu Wenru, a historian and poet in her own right.

The Ruan women were a part of the long tradition of educating women in gentry families. Patricia Buckley Ebrey, in her study of women of the Song dynasty, found that women in gentry families were educated long before the mid-Qing. The term 'educated women' used here indicates various levels of attainments, from elementary literacy to more sophisticated command of the classics. Ebrey cited as an example one Miss Ku Ching-hua (1186–1238), who had mastered the 'books of the hundred philosophers, the historical records, even Taoist (Daoist) and Buddhist books. She memorized many ancient and modern essays, exceeding even the best read Confucian (male) scholars.'⁸ The educated women at mid-Qing were no less well read. Shi Shuyi wrote in *Poets of the Inner Chamber of the Qing Era*, that educated women of that time often had mastery of classical texts. These texts included the *Classic of Filial Piety*, *Book of Odes*, *Book of Documents*, *Book of History*, *Analects of Confucius*, *Mencius*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and various Buddhist sutras, in addition to popular literature.⁹ Nevertheless, women who attained to such a high degree of learning were not common.

Educated women passed down their learning to their offspring by teaching their daughters, and often were their sons' first teachers. A study of biographical writings from the era, for example the 'Biographies of Scholars' (*Rulin Zhuan* 儒林傳) in the *History of Qing Dynasty*, reveals that it was not rare for many to be taught their first letters by their mothers. Ruan Yuan's mother was his first teacher. Her role in his upbringing has been discussed in Chapter 1 of this work already. His second wife, Kong Luhua (1777–1833), a direct lineal descendant of

7. Susan Mann, 'The Education of Daughters', in *Education and Society in Late Imperial China 1600–1900*, edited by Benjamin Elman (1994), p. 24.

8. Patricia Ebrey, *The Inner Quarters* (1993), pp. 120–4.

9. Shi Shuyi (施淑儀), *Qingdai Guike Shiren Zhenglu* (清代閨閣詩人徵略) (1922); Shanghai reprint, 1987.

Confucius, taught her daughter and began the education of her son. Ruan Yuan's concubine, Liu Wenru, taught her daughter. Ruan An was further taught by a classical scholar, but as she died at the young age of twenty *sui*, none of her work survives. The granddaughter, Ruan Enluan (阮恩灏 1823–54), a published poet and known also to have played a musical instrument, was taught by her mother.

Ruan Yuan's Homage to His Mother

In 1796, travelling from Shandong to Hangzhou to serve as Director of Studies of Zhejiang, Ruan Yuan stopped at Yangzhou and paid a visit to his mother's grave at Leitang. This was the first time he was able to return to his mother's grave since he left Yangzhou ten years earlier for Beijing to take the metropolitan examinations. He expressed in a poem his sense of loss and remorse in not being able to give his mother the comforts which would have been hers had she lived longer.

Severe frosts are covering the grasses; cold winds disturbing the leafless branches of the trees.

Painful are my thoughts that my mother now dwells in this bleakness.

Mother loved me so. Her eyes sought me one hundred times every day.

She cared for my clothes and planned for my marriage.

She taught me ancient classics as well as the ways of the world.

Painful are my thoughts now that she has departed for eternity.

For five years (after her death) I was fortunate enough to stay by the side of her grave.

For ten years, in service of the emperor, I have not been able to return to Leitang.

Now that I have come, I can compensate for all the sacrifices missed while I was away.

As I approach Leitang, I feel an urge to rush, ten steps at a time.

Painful are my thoughts that my mother is spending long years here.

My mind is full of confused thoughts and emotions – nothing rational or explicable.

I want to open the earth and rouse my mother from her slumber.

Yet, I know in my heart that she will never wake again.

As the sun sets, I can linger no longer. My heart is heavy, as I approach home.

My mother must endure heat and cold, while I enjoy luxury.¹⁰

Ruan Yuan was not reluctant to articulate his sentiments in poetry as he wrote about loved ones he had lost. This visit to his mother's grave was an especially emotional occasion. It was his first journey home since he earned his badges in Beijing. He had left as a poor candidate with hopes and dreams of passing the metropolitan examination, and returned as a high-ranking official with full

10. *YJSJ*:Poetry I:2:2.

attendant status and glory. It is understandable that he should recall by the side of his mother's grave the difficult days they shared. As the only child in an ordinary family where there was no servant, he had enjoyed her complete attention and personal care. It is understandable that he would mourn his mother's death even more since she was no longer alive to enjoy the comforts that he, as a filial son, was in a position to provide.

Ruan Yuan's Second Wife Kong Luhua

Table 11.1 Ruan Yuan's wives and concubines

Jiang (1784)	Kong (1796)	Liu (1794)	Xie (1797)	Tang (1802)
d. 1793	d. 1833	d. 1846	d. 1837	d. 1832

Note: The table shows both his wives and dates of their marriages; three concubines and (dates of their entering the Ruan household); dates of death since they all pre-deceased Ruan Yuan.

Ruan Yuan's expression of his sorrow also serves to reveal the close emotional relationship he shared with his second wife, Kong Luhua, who understood his sentiments. She wrote on a later occasion while he kept vigil by his mother's grave.

As I sit at home brewing tea, I am thinking of you,
 In solitude at Leitang, underneath the clouds.
 It is now beautiful spring time,
 Yet I cannot find joy in the sounds of gentle winds whistling through the trees.
 For, as I look in the direction of Leitang, my eyes are filled with tears.
 In despair I ascend to the pavilion where you usually sit.
 On my mind is the awareness that you are so full of sadness,
 As you keep vigil at your mother's grave.¹¹

While Ruan Yuan spent much of his time away from his first wife, he was to know domestic bliss with his second wife. Kong Luhua married Ruan Yuan in May 1796, when he was Director of Studies in Zhejiang. She was reared in the classics, while her training in the arts of womanly virtue of the Chinese gentry had not been neglected. She bore Ruan Yuan one son and one daughter who reached adulthood, supervised the running of a large household which moved periodically and which included three concubines, six children, their spouses, concubines, children, and servants. It also included his cousin Ruan Heng, who served informally as the manager of the household. The government secretaries

11. Kong Luhua, *Draft Poems* 2:5a–b.

with expertise in administration, law, and taxation, because the system at that time, were also a part of the official's household, as well as the retinue of scholars Ruan always had working with him on various literary projects.

Kong Luhua was given credit for re-introducing the silk worm to the north side of the Yangzi, and used the plight of the silkworm workers to write poetry to counsel her children to be appreciative and frugal. One of the poems was inspired by a painting by Ruan Yuan's concubine, Xie Xue (謝雪 1783–1837) on the subject of raising silk worms. The painting, long since lost, showed how peasant women raised silk worms by picking mulberry leaves to feed them. The leaves had to be gathered in the early morning with the dew still on them. The silk worm trays had to be cleaned each day. The worms grew rapidly, demanding constant attention, their appetite increased voraciously. The tender mulberry leaves suited the young worms, but, as they matured, the worms chewed up everything: leaves, stems, all, so their trays had to be replenished and cleaned several times a day. In other words, raising silk worms was extremely tedious work and labour-intensive.

In the quietness, I recall our days in Zhejiang; and how piteous the peasant women were.

Each year, as spring turns into summer, they raise silk worms, labouring longer than in the fields.

Never avoiding hard work, they climb high into the hills before dawn to gather mulberry leaves.

Here, on the northern shore of the Yangzi, cocoons are few.

I brought silk worm eggs from Zhejiang, and began to raise them in the house.

Mulberry leaves are so plentiful here, there is no need to pay money for them.

The servants from Zhejiang with long years of experience raising silkworms, ...

My thoughts and words for you children are that, as you don clothes of silk,

Remember the thousands of leaves from the mulberry trees,

and long months of hard work by a large number of peasant women.¹²

The message here was clearly for the children to appreciate what they had and not to waste. It was acceptable for women in the Confucian persuasion to write poems on certain themes, among these were advice to their children to follow established standards of behaviour. Kong's poems were no exception. Frugality and diligence were recurring themes in her poetry. She was proud of her husband and admonished the children to emulate him. She wrote:

Study and work hard, be frugal, and avoid luxurious ostentation;

Make sure that poems and books keep company with incense; and writing brushes with tea.

12. *Draft Poems* 3:14a–b.

Guard against all temptations that may come your way;
Then we will not be ashamed to have you as a member of this family.¹³

The winter of 1807 found Ruan heading for Beijing without his family. He had completed the period of mourning for the death of his father, and had gone to Beijing for an imperial audience and to await another assignment. It was not feasible for him to take his family which at that time had included five young children. The prospect of moving a large household to Beijing without certainty of length of stay was horrendous even without taking into account the expenses involved. The family was reluctant to part with him as much as he hated leaving them behind. An, at that time five years old, like children elsewhere, begged to go with her father.¹⁴ Kong wrote to Ruan of the family's longing for him, as she sat long into the night in Yangzhou, on the shore of the Yangzi River, and the message that 'the neighbours are making snide remarks about our sentimental display of emotions'.¹⁵ Ruan Yuan replied:

By the fire that is about to go out, I read your letter with care.
I am happy to see your quiet poems on the pages, and cheered by the news that all is well.
The banks of the Yangzi are not alone in boasting people burning the midnight oil.
We in the imperial city, also, are not waiting idly for the winter to pass.
The bamboo groves that I planted – at least two or three of the stalks must be assuring you that I am safe.¹⁶

Kong sent this reply. Ruan Yuan had known the homesickness she felt for her parents when they were first married. Now she revealed that her longing for him was even greater.

As winter is here and the quince trees in the yard about to bloom,
I am too lethargic to open a book.
Several years ago I had felt so homesick for Qufu (曲阜);
Now I feel even more keenly your absence at the capital.
I feel cold and lonely in front of these windows.
It must be even colder and more lonesome where you are.
Suddenly, as I hold your rhymes in my hand, I can sense your warmth;
And, indeed, the sun is shining over the three bamboo stalks.¹⁷

13. *Diziji* 7:6b–7.

14. *Draft Poems* 4:5.

15. *Draft Poems* 4:5.

16. *Draft Poems* 4:5b.

17. *Draft Poems* 4:5.

From time to time Kong visited her parents at Qufu, but she rushed to Ruan Yuan's side when he needed her. In October 1809, Kong was at Qufu when the Jiaqing Emperor suddenly dismissed Ruan Yuan from the governorship of Zhejiang and recalled him to Beijing over the Liu Fenggao affair.¹⁸ She left for Beijing immediately upon receiving the news, and arranged for the Ruan household to stay in the Beijing residence of the Duke Yansheng, her brother, the senior member of the Confucius clan of that generation. This move was more significant than it appeared on the surface. It reduced expenditure as Ruan Yuan did not have to purchase or rent a residence in Beijing. Buying a house would have given the impression that he was planning to stay in the capital on an extended basis whereas it should be the emperor's prerogative to decide his future. A residence would be judged by capital gossip to be either too ostentatious or too humble, and would have been so reported to the emperor. Duke Yansheng's residence allowed Ruan Yuan to maintain a dignified lifestyle while retaining the posture that he was only in Beijing at the emperor's disposal, waiting for the emperor to forgive him and assign him to a new post. Furthermore, whereas few other men would want to become involved with an official in disgrace, the duke, whose relationship with Ruan Yuan was a close personal one, did not need to fear being embroiled in the emperor's ire against Ruan Yuan.

While Ruan Yuan remained silent on his personal feelings on certain official issues, Kong's poems filled some of this void. Upon receiving news of the capture on the Zhejiang coast of the pirate holding a Vietnamese commission, Kong realized the significance of the achievement for her husband. She wrote: 'I am rejoicing because now the pirates will no longer be able to come ashore to kidnap sons and daughters of coastal residents, causing pain and anguish.'¹⁹ Earlier, when Ruan was visiting the coast as Director of Studies in the province, he had seen the sufferings the pirates had caused. He was quoted as having remarked that 'should I ever be given the responsibility, I would do everything I can to eradicate coastal piracy'.²⁰ In a poem addressed posthumously to Li Changgeng (李長庚), the noted pirate-fighter and Ruan Yuan's close colleague during his first term as Governor of Zhejiang, Kong echoed her husband's sense of loss in Li's death. Li had implemented Ruan Yuan's anti-piracy measures formulated in consultation with the Jiaqing Emperor. It was in the Chinese tradition to write essays or poems to people who were already dead. They believed or at least found it satisfactory to play on the ancient notion that the dead would receive the

18. See Appendix V.

19. *Draft Poems* 1:4b–5.

20. Jiao Xun's record of Ruan Yuan's anti-piracy measures, as cited in *Yingzhou Bitan*, juan 1.

message when the sheet of paper on which the essay or poem was written was consigned to the fire. Kong wrote to Li that 'my husband had always said that you had conducted the anti-piracy campaigns brilliantly and conscientiously, disregarding personal danger. When you were living, you served the country well. In dying, you provided us with a fine example of bravery and sacrifice. Now that you are among the stars, I hope that you will choose to shine upon us, for, without you, my husband no longer has anyone to share his thoughts on military strategy.'²¹

It may sound callous and unfeeling, but Ruan Yuan was fortunate indeed to have lost his first wife, who had been a distant relative from an obscure background. Kong Luhua brought him intellectual companionship and social standing. In addition to managing his household, she undertook other responsibilities for him, including literary obligations he did not have time to fulfil himself. Kong was happy to see the establishment of the Xuehaitang. In founding this academy, Ruan was hoping to raise the standard of education and learning in Guangdong. The couple were ecstatic when an academy graduate ranked first on the metropolitan examination in 1823, only three years after the academy opened.²²

The path of Kong's life as Ruan's wife was not always trouble-free. She lost an infant son in 1804 when he was two years old, and her only daughter at the age of twenty in 1821, eleven years before her own death. As a young bride of eighteen years of age in 1796, it must have taken a great deal of tact to be mistress of a household that already included a concubine and a young son, and was to add two more concubines and several children within the next few years. By observing the strict order of wife and concubines living in one household, Ruan Yuan and Kong were able to preserve a proper perspective. At least the mother-in-law with strong ideas and views was not alive to complicate matters further. The fact that Ruan Yuan had neither brother nor sister must also have helped.

Kong's advice to her own daughter who was about to be married into a scholarly but non-official family in 1820 shed light on how she managed the Ruan household and the complex relationships within it. 'Rise early to wait on your in-laws, and listen to what they say with care. Remember all the time that you are no longer a child at your parents' knee. Be understanding and considerate of your husband. Be kind and gentle to your sisters and sisters-in-law. Do not give people cause to complain that you have not been brought up properly, or that you are spoiled because your father is a prominent official.'²³

21. *Draft Poems* 4:2a–b.

22. *Draft Poems* 7:15.

23. *Draft Poems* 7:6b–7.

Kong's final years were spent away from Ruan Yuan. When the Ruan family left Guangzhou for Kunming in the summer of 1826, Kong and their son Konghou opted to visit Yangzhou first. Kong had wanted to return to Qufu to see her mother. She also wanted to take her new daughter-in-law to pay respects to the Ruan ancestors in the form of ancestral tablets at the family shrine. In reality, perhaps, somebody had to go to Yangzhou to take care of affairs. Ruan Yuan had bought marsh land on a number of small islets on the bank of the Yangzi, and the reeds grown on the islets were to be a major source of income for the family after his retirement in 1838. As their children married, space had to be provided for their growing families. Living quarters were being built adjacent to the family shrine. Kong did not have to worry about management of household revenue or expenditure, but she had to make other decisions and supervise the household in Yangzhou. She was to have joined Ruan Yuan in Kunming in 1829, but did not make the journey until 1832. On the way, she came down with cholera. She was not pleased to have Ruan Yuan summoned by the emperor so soon after her arrival. She died in February 1833.

The marriage between Ruan Yuan and Kong Luhua, lasting thirty-seven years, appeared to be a happy one. There were separations as Kong visited her family in Qufu or remained in Yangzhou while Ruan Yuan went off to various posts, but they corresponded while they were apart. While no letter, if any is still in existence at all, is available to this research, the poems they exchanged serve to shed light on their life together.

Ruan Yuan's Concubines

Concubinage as an institution was not limited to China as other traditional societies also condoned polygamous arrangements. Whereas wives came from comparable economic and social background as the men, concubines did not. Women who became concubines could be from either the rank of the servants in the household or from the outside. It is important to note that Qing law classified household servants as 'mean-people' who were not permitted to marry outside their ranks. Nor were they allowed to marry at all without the consent of their masters.²⁴ A maid servant, however, could become a concubine to her master. While children of two servants retained their low status, sons of concubines took on the status of their fathers, enjoying such rights as eligibility to take civil service examinations. For this reason, some servants willingly became concubines.

24. *Huidian shili* JQ 10. See Dai Xuanzhi (戴玄之), 'Qingdai de Nubi' (清代的奴婢) (1985), pp. 7–8; see also Wei Qingyuan, *Qingdai Nubi Zhidu* (清代奴婢制度) (1982), p. 111.

Concubines could be teenage girls bought from poor families that needed cash; others could come from the rank of the courtesans. The courtesans were usually from poor families, girls who were either sold by their parents or were kidnapped at a young age, to be trained to entertain men. Literacy to the level of being able to compose poetry could be a part of their training, which could also include painting, calligraphic and musical skills.

Although the 'official courtesan' system was abolished during the Qing, private enterprise continued to thrive.²⁵ The institution was allowed to exist, as Paul S. Ropp has found, because it was 'outside the kinship blocks of Chinese society'.²⁶ Supply was assured as long as parents sold their daughters and as 'their daughters ... received training in a competitive atmosphere where beauty, talent, and accomplishment were valued, and where upward social mobility through marriage or concubinage was a possibility'.²⁷

Ruan Yuan's concubines were all in their teens when they entered his household. Liu Wenru was a maid servant to his first wife. In 1794, she became the then widower Ruan Yuan's first concubine when she was sixteen. She learned to read and write in the Ruan household, and became interested in historical research. Liu also wrote poetry, but not many of her poems survive. Her major literary achievement was a study of the doubtful dates in the *Four Histories*. The work comprised seven chapters, one each on *History of the Han Dynasty* and *History of the Later Han Dynasty*, three chapters on *History of the Three Kingdoms*, and two on *History of the Jin Dynasty*. The author's own preface claimed this study to have been inspired by the *Records of Uncertain Dates* (*Yi'nan Lu* 疑年錄) by Qian Daxin (錢大昕 1728–1804), one of the Han Learning scholars whose works on textual criticism Ruan Yuan admired.²⁸

Ruan Yuan's preface to this work reveals his attitude towards learning for women. He believed in educating women in the classics, literature, and history, as evidenced by his training Liu and encouraging her to undertake this historical project. Kong had come to him already educated. Perhaps he taught his other two concubines, or at least encouraged further the development of their literary skills as they were trained in domestic responsibilities. Yang Jie, a scholar from

25. Ebrey, p. 264. Statutes prohibiting this system were quoted in Wang Shunu (王書奴), *Zhongguo Changji Shi* (中國娼妓史) (1934), pp. 261–2.

26. Paul S. Ropp, 'Ambiguous Images of Courtesan Culture in Late Imperial China', in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, edited by Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang (1997), p. 43.

27. Ropp, 'Ambiguous Images' (1997), pp. 43–4.

28. Paul Pelliot, 'Les Yi Nien Lou', *T'oung Pao* 25 (1928), pp. 66–8. Qian's work 'became the basis of the most important dictionary of dates in the Chinese language', Biography by Ch'en Ta-hsin (Qian Daxin) by Tu Lien-chi, in *ECCP*, pp. 152–5.

Zhejiang he respected highly was hired to tutor his daughter, An. Yet, the preface to Liu's work offers an apology to the readers 'that a woman should be permitted to have the audacity to take on a scholar's task'²⁹ in historical research. By publishing this work which he undoubtedly edited and proof-read, he showed that he was satisfied with Liu's scholarship. At the same time, he felt that he had to adopt a patronizing stance, reflecting chauvinistic attitude a man of the Confucian persuasion was expected to avow, that a woman's place was in the inner chamber while scholarly research was a man's prerogative.

Apparently Ruan Yuan's harem had not been kept strictly to the inner chamber, however. Liang Zhangju (梁章鉅 1775–1849), a scholar official who spent the duration of the Opium War in Yangzhou where his son was prefect, and saw Ruan often, writes about Liu Wenru. 'This concubine of Ruan Yuan, Madam Liu Wenru, joined his household as a maid servant to his first wife. Twice he was widowed, and Madam Liu had been of tremendous comfort and support for him.'³⁰ On her seventieth birthday in 1846, Liang had wished to go to the Ruan house to offer his greetings in person, but instead Ruan Yuan went to Liang's residence to stop him, and accepted a congratulatory poem as a present on her behalf. This incident does not necessarily mean that Liu was ordinarily present when Liang came to call, but it does show that Ruan Yuan's concubines were accepted as a part of the social life of retired officials of advanced age.

Liang's anecdote does not clarify the issue whether Liu had come with Ruan's first wife as 'accompanying servant to the bride' (*peifang yatou* 陪房丫頭). At the time of Ruan and Jiang's wedding in 1784, Liu was seven, so would have been too young. Therefore it was unlikely for her to have entered the Ruan household at that time. There is no evidence, however, that this was not the case. It is more likely that Liu come into the Ruan household in 1786 when his wife was expecting a child and when Ruan Yuan was leaving for Beijing to take the metropolitan examination. Liu would have been nine by that time, therefore mature enough to handle certain household chores and to offer some companionship to the young mother. When Ruan Yuan's father took Jiang and her baby to Beijing in 1792, Liu would have been fourteen and a useful adjunct to the travelling household.

Almost nothing is known about the other two concubines, Xie Xue (1783–1837) and Tang Qingyun (唐慶雲 1787–1832), except that the former had come from Wuxi (無錫) and the latter from Changzhou (常州), both in Jiangsu. These cities were known for beautiful courtesans, but this fact alone does not mean that Xie and Tang were indeed of courtesan background. Since they were at

29. *Sishi Yinianlu*, preface by Ruan Yuan.

30. Liang Zhangju, *Langji Congtan* (浪跡叢談) 1:19b.

least sufficiently literate to compose poetry, however, and since they were able to paint, and at least Tang played a musical instrument, with the contemporary custom of presenting officials with young courtesans to be concubines, there is at least a chance that the women had been trained in that profession. The 'most accomplished ones (courtesans) served a clientele of high-ranking scholar-officials',³¹ and as Xie and Tang were young teenagers when they entered the Ruan household, chances were also good that they had come as young maidens. The women would have already learned the rudiments of literary skills, and more likely than not were handed over to Kong and Liu for further training. Had they come from scholarly families which would have explained their education, Xie and Tang would have been married instead of becoming concubines. It is possible, of course, that they were not of courtesan background. Then, their literary skills would have been developed after they entered the Ruan household. The dates of their 'accessions' were recorded in the *Diziji*, Xie in August 1797, and Tang in March 1802. Xie was the mother of Ruan Fu (福), born in 1802 when she was nineteen. Tang was childless.

In *Historical Tales of Lifestyles of Chinese Women* (*Zhongguo Funu Shenghuo Shihua* 中國婦女生活史話), Guo Licheng recalls the 'slender horses' of Yangzhou, an euphemism for courtesans in training. The adjective 'slender' comes from a lake in Yangzhou reputed to be of comparable beauty to the West Lake in Hangzhou, except narrower, hence the name Slender West Lake. These young 'slender horses' in Yangzhou, divulges Guo, were trained in literary and artistic skills, including playing chess, to amuse the young officials of the Ming and Qing era while they kept company. It was the practice for a young man who had just passed his metropolitan examination to 'give himself a literary name (*hao* 號), obtain for himself a concubine, and print a manuscript of his literary works'³² as symbols of his new success. The reason for the women being called 'slender horses' was also given by Guo. The young women were for sale by the time they reached fourteen *sui*, therefore were 'slender' like the lake. Like young horses, they could be trained into well-groomed animals to please the officials. Ruan Yuan's records are silent on how Xie and Tang were accessed. Buying and selling persons was legal and ethical during the Qing.

By the mid-Qing, works by courtesans were no longer celebrated as literature. Once a courtesan entered the household of an official, she would no longer be considered a courtesan. As members of the inner chamber of Ruan Yuan, Xie and Tang's works would have been published. Tang's name appears in the Gazetteer of Suzhou, as the author of *Draft Compositions by Nuluoting* (*Nuluoting*

31. Ebrey, p. 253.

32. Guo Licheng (郭立誠), *Zhongguo Funu Shenghuo Shihua* (中國婦女生活史話) (1983), p. 135.

Shigao 女蘿亭詩稿).³³ A postscript by the author explains further that at first there were only five *juan*, but later on another *juan* was added. It appears that Xie was the only concubine who did not command sufficient scholarship or literary talents to warrant an individual volume.

Relationship among the Women

How well did the women of the Ruan household, wife, concubines, and in time daughters-in-law, get along? The different dialects spoken alone would have been interesting but could have been a major cause for domestic misunderstanding. Kong Luhua, even more than Ruan Yuan, would have been the one to set the tone for harmony in the inner chamber. Kong was brought up to marry into a household where she would be expected to handle complex personal relationships with poise and tact. Although she was trained in the Confucian classics, as well as the Chinese tradition, she was of the conviction that a woman's primary responsibility was to keep a home for her husband. In the Ruan household she was supportive and understanding of her husband, cordial and generous to his concubines, and was an especially good friend to Liu Wenru, who had been Ruan Yuan's concubine before her own marriage.

Kong did not allow the idea of equality to prevail at any time. It was always clear that she had come from the line of Confucius. The prominence of her family had been indicated by her being presented to the Qianlong Emperor and his mother when they visited Qufu in 1790.³⁴ This singular honor was recalled again and again, and was immortalized in a poem. In referring to herself, she was the 'wife' (*qi* 妻) of Ruan Yuan whereas the others were 'concubines' (*qie* 妾) or 'women of the side chambers' (*ceshi* 側室). This distinction was acknowledged by the emperor as well as society. Kong was given the title of Lady of the First Rank shortly after she was married, even though her husband had remained a second-rank official for most of his career. Kong signed her formal works as 'Kong Luhua, the Eldest Grand-daughter of the 73rd Generation Lineal Descendent of Confucius'.³⁵ Her informal writings, such as poetry, were signed simply 'by Jinglou' her pen name (*zi* 字).

33. As quoted in Hu, p. 350. This work is said to have been printed in 1814 with a preface by Kong Luhua, 'Nu Luo', also called 'luosong', is sometimes translated as 'dodder'. The name of *ting* is probably an allusion to an item in the *Classic of Poetry*, where it is described as a clinging (parasitical) moss-like grass that grows over and drapes itself on the pine and cypress trees, creating a beautiful effect. See James Legge (trs.) *Book of Poetry*, in the *Chinese Classics* IV (1960 edition), pp. 389–90. I am grateful to F. W. Mote for all these references.

34. *Draft Poems* 1:1a–b.

35. *Draft Poems* 6:33.

While Ruan Yuan served in the provinces, one of the women usually remained in Yangzhou. Since they produced children, it must be concluded that they all shared Ruan's bed. There is no account of their daily life, but surviving are poems composed by the women, in the tradition of each writing two lines to form a whole poem, showing at least companionship in the inner chamber. The poems, printed in *Draft Poems*, are always titled, but unfortunately never dated. There are several extremely long poems, lauding the glories of each season of the year, but there is one eight-line poem that can be quoted here in its entirety. This poem gives a picture of four comrades enjoying a peaceful moment together in a late afternoon.

Tang: It is now twilight of a late winter day;
We sit by the window, composing a poem together.
Kong: A new moon is hanging outside the curtains;
Smoke from the incense is circling our sleeves.
Liu Wind blowing through the paper window pane sounding like prancing stallions;
Vapor from the tea cups giving the impression of silver boats.
Tang: I turn and see the shadow of the plum blossoms on the screen;
As the sun sinks below the horizon.³⁶

When the women were apart, they exchanged poems. Kong wrote to Liu and Xie from Beijing.

I finished a letter, sealed it in an envelope, and opened it again;
Filled with anxiety that I cannot put into words, so I said nothing.
The incense is finished and the candle about to go out;
Somehow I feel the pressure of the passing year.
Please do not keep our host (Ruan Yuan) waiting so anxiously.
Come to Beijing soon.³⁷

When Liu and Xie arrived with the children, Kong wrote a poem of welcome.

Seeing you after such a long time, I cannot stop smiling,
Over the fact that the inner chamber is complete once more.
For two years you have kept the home fire burning;
Now you and I can keep company again.
The children have all grown;
And everything at home is well.
From this time onward, we shall all live in happiness;
Friends together, to overcome the wintry coldness.³⁸

36. *Draft Poems* 6:33.

37. *Draft Poems* 6:33.

38. *Draft Poems* 6:2b.

Liu responded.

When the family is gathered we cannot stop looking at each other;
 Our conversations never cease.
 We speak on everything that is pleasant to us in the inner chamber;
 We play chess and music, everything that reflects our joy of being together.
 The bright moon is hanging over our home in Yangzhou;
 But the zephyr has blown us to the capital.
 The path of life is not always easy;
 Fortunately innocence has kept the children from such reality.³⁹

Ruan Yuan's Daughter An

It is difficult to dismiss the impression that the apple of Ruan Yuan's eye was his daughter Ruan An, whose mother was Kong Luhua. Apparently, unlike her brothers none of whom had displayed the father's brilliant intellect, Ruan An was a precocious child who was able to write poetry at the age of seven *sui*. Her mother had mused that 'were you a boy, you would certainly have been able to follow your father's footsteps.'⁴⁰ An was tutored by Yan Jie, a classical scholar to whom Ruan Yuan had entrusted the monumental literary task of compiling the *Essays on the Classics by Scholars of the Qing Dynasty* (*Huang Qing Jingjie* 皇清經解). Having such a noted scholar as teacher to a daughter also showed that An's literary abilities must have been of high standard. It was within the precept of the Confucian propriety. Chen Dongyuan cites the regulations governing instruction of women students over the age of ten by male teachers that no such teacher could be under fifty *sui*.⁴¹ Yan at that time was older than fifty.

Yan also tutored An's betrothed, Zhang Xi (張熙 1803–22).⁴² Zhang was a younger son of an old friend of Ruan Yuan from the same home prefecture. The friend was a scholar but not an official, and was willing for his son to remain in Ruan Yuan's home in order to receive a good education. An and Zhang did not share a study, however. Not only etiquette of propriety was against such practices, the texts used in teaching men and women were not the same. There were different versions of the same classical texts. Despite the fact that Zhang was ill with a parasitic liver shortly after their engagement was formalized, the marriage took place anyway. Zhang was 'good at both prose and poetry, and was particularly

39. *Draft Poems* 6:2b.

40. *Draft Poems* 4:17b.

41. Chen Dongyuan (陳東原), *Zhongguo Funu Shenghuo Shi* (中國婦女生活史) (1978 edition), p. 282.

42. *Xuxiu Jiangdu Xianzhi* (續修江都縣志), compiled by Qian Xiangbao (錢祥保) (1926), *juan* 25.

interested in the plants of the Guangdong region'.⁴³ The parasitic liver turned into cirrhosis, and then cancer. He died at the age of nineteen *sui*, leaving his young bride a widow with an unborn child. Shortly thereafter, Ruan An also died.

Ruan Yuan's essay on the death of An was full of pathos, revealing a loving father who was trying to find solace in reconciling her death in terms of Confucian propriety. Upon her husband's death, An was so depressed that she expressed the wish to die also. Meanwhile, she was expecting a child. An's nurse heard her talk aloud to the unborn child, 'I am keeping you alive because I am hoping that you will be a boy. As a boy, you will be able to carry on your father's line.'⁴⁴ A few months later, An was found dead after she gave birth to a daughter. The family feared that she had committed suicide in the time-honoured Chinese way by swallowing gold, but found all her gold jewels intact.

Biographies of women who had committed suicide in order to avoid unwanted marriages, widows who did not wish to remarry, and wives facing insoluble conflict between their own and husbands' families, fill the pages of local gazetteers and various biographies of virtuous women (*lienu zhuan* 列女傳). Widows taking their own lives were not uncommon as the position of a widow, especially a childless young widow, was nebulous. Andrew Hsieh analyzed various circumstances under which a wife had no alternative but to take her own life. One of the circumstances was widowhood without male children, like An.⁴⁵ In the *Imperial Encyclopaedia*, Hsieh found 2,749 cases of notable female suicide during the Ming and the Qing. Young widows took their own lives because they were forced to marry a second time, or when life in their husband's homes became intolerable.

Ruan An's case was unusual. Regardless of what her mother wrote at the time of her marriage, An had never left her parents' home. Her betrothed, at that time, had come to Guangzhou in order to continue his studies under Yan Jie. When they married and even after his death, An continued to live at the residence of the Governor-General at Guangzhou, namely at the home of her parents. In time she would have to 'return' to the home of her in-laws, who would have been strangers. It was this fear, possibly on top of a case of deep postnatal depression, that led to her suicide. Or, she could have died of an undiagnosed illness, an infection after childbirth, perhaps. No one knew.

43. *Diziji* II:6.

44. *Diziji* II:6.

45. Andrew Hsieh and Jonathan Spence, 'Suicide and the Family in Pre-Modern Chinese Society', in *Normal and Abnormal Behavior in Chinese Culture* (1981), p. 30.

Ruan Yuan then decided that she had died fulfilling a wish to join her husband. At the same time, he had to assure himself that by dying, An had not committed any act of impropriety in the Confucian context. He wrote that had An died before she knew whether she was carrying a male or female child, and had inadvertently caused the death of a son, resulting in depriving her late husband of a male heir, it would have been against all rules of Confucian propriety. If, in dying, she had left her husband's parents without anyone to take care of them, she would have committed an act of impropriety. Now that she had given birth to a daughter, it was clear that she had not denied her husband a son. Her in-laws were still healthy and strong. There were three other daughters-in-law to wait upon them. Therefore, An was justified to indulge in yielding to her wish to join her husband in death.⁴⁶ Hence, Ruan decided to inter them in the same tomb, as in the proper Confucian tradition.

The Issue of Male Teachers

So far in this study, I have not had to call on fictional works for support. For information on actual teaching of women by male teachers, however, I will need to rely on the Qing novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (紅樓夢). Lin Daiyu (林黛玉), one of the principal characters of the story and daughter of the Salt Commissioner in Suzhou, was tutored at home by an expectant official before she went to live with her maternal grandmother upon the death of her mother. At that time Lin was just before puberty, but her exact age was not clearly specified. Lin was five *sui* when she was taught by the male teacher. The lessons with the male teacher took place in the study, and, being a single child, she was accompanied by a couple of young maid servants.⁴⁷ When she arrived at her grandmother's home and was asked what she had been learning, she replied 'I have just finished studying the Four Classics.'⁴⁸ Her female cousins at the grandmother's were also educated, as the story unfolded, but, when Lin asked what they were studying, the grandmother responded modestly that the cousins were 'merely learning to recognize a few characters'.⁴⁹ In actuality, the cousins were all of sufficient literacy to write poetry. Whereas the male cousins studied under a scholar in a suite of classrooms outside the family living quarters, the women did not. These talented young women of the *Dream of the Red Chamber* wrote poetry, but they could also

46. YZBT 5: 21b–22b.

47. Cao Xueqin, *Honglou Meng* (紅樓夢) (1992 edition), p. 12.

48. Cao, p. 25.

49. Cao, p. 25.

recall passages from the classics, commentary essays on the classics, popular fiction, Daoist and Buddhist sutras, and operatic literature. They painted, played chess and musical instruments, in addition to mastery of embroidery and other womanly crafts.

Ruan Yuan's Granddaughter, Enluan

Ruan Yuan's third eldest granddaughter, Enluan, was almost a postscript to this account as Ruan Yuan did not have a direct hand in her education or upbringing. Since her father was Ruan Changsheng, strictly speaking she was not descended from Ruan Yuan by blood. Nevertheless, the Ruan tradition of educating daughters prevailed in her case. She was accomplished in poetry, music, and painting. Local lore reveals that after his retirement in Yangzhou, Ruan would listen to Enluan on the *guzhen* (古琴, or zither) in his studio and would ask her to play a tune repeatedly. Nothing else is known about Ruan Enluan except that she was married in 1852 to Shen Lin (沈霖) of Yangzhou. A collection of eighty-four poems, *Collected Poems from the Studio Where Kindness and Gratitude Meet* (*Ci'enhui Guan shiji* 慈恩會館詩集) was printed in 1853 under the Shen imprint, with a preface by her brother Ruan Enhai, and six congratulatory poems from women friends. The preface written by her husband further states that Ruan had 'mastered The Classic of Odes in the Mao Chang (毛昌) Tradition'.⁵⁰ Her poems were of sufficient quality and popularity to warrant another printing in 1882.⁵¹

Concluding Comments

In general, it is mothers who pass down to the next generation moral and ethical values, religious beliefs, and popular traditions. Ruan Yuan's values as well as his attitudes towards women were inherited from his mother. David Johnson, in his study of popular culture in late imperial China, finds that the mothers in gentry families 'naturally instilled elements of non-classical and even folk culture into the consciousness of their sons, and when those boys grew up, their wives and concubines helped ensure that they did not forget what they had learned at their mother's knee. And precisely the same point can be made of the servants who surrounded such men throughout their lives'.⁵² The Ruan women would fit

50. Mao Chang was a scholar of the second century BC to whom is attributed the text of the *Classic of Poetry*.

51. Hu, p. 290; Shi, pp. 526–7.

52. David Johnson, 'Communication, Class, and Consciousness in Late Imperial China', in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (1985), p. 62.

into this role as perpetrators of cultural traditions, but they were exceptional in that they were educated whereas most of the Chinese mothers were not.

The question I asked at the beginning of this chapter and I ask now in conclusion, why, despite intellectual enlightenment, were these women willing to keep to their ‘assigned places’ in society — in the inner chamber and as members of a harem. The answer must come from an understanding of contemporary mores. Learning for Chinese women of the mid-Qing, as for the men of the era, served to reiterate traditions and values of the Confucian persuasion. As a whole, the large number of women who received classical education did not attain to the same height as the men. Understanding Confucianism together with the rules men and women were required to follow meant that one had to be of the most tolerant mind and attitude in order to get along. It is also important to note that such achievements by women would not have been possible had the environment created by their men — fathers and husbands — were less nurturing. In a tradition where individuals were secondary to the society, the educated women’s achievements as classical scholars, or even merely as poets and painters, were not important on the list of their priorities. Nor were these achievements significant in the context of education and learning. Intellectual enlightenment did not lead to social progress as the term is understood today. Gender equality and monogamous marriage are concepts alien to the Confucian persuasion. Since these women also read popular fiction, watched Chinese opera, and knew folk lore and other traditions, it was more their role as communicators of all learning and, in particular as transmitters of culture and tradition of the Confucian persuasion that cannot be overestimated.

PART FIVE

The Senior Statesman

12

Glories of Long Service: Grand Secretary in Beijing, 1835–8

In 1835, when Ruan Yuan was seventy-two *sui*, he was recalled to Beijing, whereby ending a career of more than thirty years in the provinces. Until 1838 when he retired to Yangzhou he remained in the capital, enjoying the life and status of a first rank senior official. His schedule was not demanding, and, although not in the inner court, his offices were in or near the Forbidden City. He held the title Grand Secretary, with the portfolio of Superintendent of the Board of War, concurrently also Senior President of the Censorate and Senior Professor of the Hanlin Academy. Meanwhile, his other assignments included being Reader of the Palace Examination in 1836. He attended to other administrative and ceremonial matters as well, all of which wielded very little power, but gave him a great deal of pleasure and prestige, nevertheless.

Grand Secretary

Ruan Yuan had held the title Acting Grand Secretary since 1833. He was informed of his transfer to Beijing as Grand Secretary through an imperial edict dated 31 March 1835 (DG 15/3/3).¹ Meanwhile, he was instructed to remain in Kunming while his successor as Governor-General of Yunnan and Guizhou, Yilibu, then Governor of Yunnan, went to the capital for an imperial audience. Each grand secretary enjoyed an additional designation of the name of a palace (*dian* 殿) or pavilion (*ge* 閣) in the Forbidden City. Ruan Yuan's designation was Grand Secretary of the Pavilion of Sympathetic Benevolence (Tiren Ge 體仁閣) 1A.²

1. JJLF-DG062408 (DG12/12/13 [1833/2/2]), Grand Council copy of memorial from Ruan Yuan, Assistant Grand Secretary and Governor-General of Yunnan and Guizhou.

2. Authorities on the institution of Grand Secretariat or the Forbidden City do not appear to consider the designation to a particular 'throne hall' or 'pavilion' significant. At the time of Ruan Yuan's appointment, the Sympathetic Benevolence Pavilion title was vacated by transferring the

The position of Grand Secretary, despite lacking in real political power by Daoguang's time, still made Ruan Yuan one of the most prominent officials at court. Having an office in the Forbidden City meant that he was to be one of the major 'advisory officials' (*fuchen* 輔臣), at the emperor's beck and call day and night, and in person.³

Ruan Yuan's journey from Kunming to Beijing must have been arduous since it took place in the heat of the summer, once again. His son Konghou, who had just arrived from Yangzhou where he had gone to bury his mother, accompanied his 71-year-old father. They left Kunming on 3 July (DG15/6/8) and arrived in Beijing on 11 October (DG15/8/20), spending a little more than three months on the road.⁴ There was no record on how they travelled, or indeed the route they took, except a brief note in the *Diziji* that they had 'travelled northward'.⁵ There has been an indirect reference that they had made a detour through Yangzhou although Ruan Yuan's own record was silent on this point. It is reasonable to conjecture that they had travelled by boat down the Yangzi at a leisurely pace, and stopped somewhere from time to time to recoup their energies, and presumably they visited Yangzhou.

A passage in *Lenglu Zashi* (冷蘆雜識, Miscellaneous intelligences from a cold hut), first printed in 1856, by Lu Yitian (陸以湉), a metropolitan graduate of 1836, claimed that Ruan Yuan had stopped in Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu, to visit Lin Zexu, who was at that time governor of the province. Ruan Yuan brought

current holder, Pan Shi'en, to another. There is no documentary evidence that this was a sentimental gesture on the part of the emperor. Zhu Gui, Ruan Yuan's mentor, had been Grand Secretary of this pavilion. The pavilion is located on the eastern wall of the central part of the Forbidden City, about ten minutes walk to the Grand Secretariat; conversations with Chan Long (陳朗). See *Forbidden City* (紫禁城) 19 (March 1983), p. 23. See also *Guochao Gongshi Xubian* (國朝宮史續編), compiled by Qing Gui (慶桂) and others of the Jiaqing reign (Beiping reprint 1932) 27:5b–6. This work is referred in subsequent notes as *Palace History*. Also Fu Ge (福格, d. 1856), *Tingyu Congtan* (聽雨叢談), Beijing (1984 edition), p. 24. This work was printed from a manuscript copy in the collection of the late Fu Zengxiang (傅曾湘). Fu Ge was a penname. His surname was Feng (馮) and sobriquet Shen Zhi (申之). His great-grandfather, a Chinese member of the Yellow Bordered Banner, was a grand secretary during the Qianlong reign. All English names of palaces, pavilions, and gates in the Forbidden City come from Arlington and Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking* (1987 edition).

3. It was the responsibility of the Grand Secretary to 'assist and advice the emperor at all times'. Xi Wu'ao (席吳鑒), *Neige Zhi* (內閣志, The Grand Secretariat), as cited in Li Pengnian, *Qingdai Zhongyang Guojia Jiguan Gaishu* (清代中央國家機關概述) (1983), p. 49.

4. *Diziji* 7:27b. There was an intercalary sixth month in the lunar calendar that year.

5. *Diziji* 7:27b. The compiler of this *juan* was Ruan Konghou, who, for some reason, noted fewer details.

Lin a marble screen from Dali. The grain of the marble made a beautiful picture. This type of artwork was in demand at that time. Lu wrote that Ruan Yuan had visited Lin on both his trips to Beijing from Kunming in 1831 and 1835.⁶ In addition to the merits of stone pictures, Lin must have learned from Ruan Yuan how he handled the opium issue earlier — expropriating the cargo from the dealers and destroying it. The only difference between Lin's act and Ruan Yuan's earlier lay in the fact that Ruan Yuan seized the opium from Chinese handlers while Lin confiscated directly from the British.

Arrival in Beijing

Upon arrival in Beijing, Ruan Yuan presented himself at the Forbidden City to pay homage to Daoguang who received him immediately. Noticing Ruan Yuan's advanced years and deteriorating physical condition, the emperor decreed:

Grand Secretary Ruan Yuan is assigned to superintend the Board of War. Since he is more than seventy *sui* and is not in the best of health, he is excused from wearing the heavy official collar when he attends the obligatory imperial audience on the occasion of his starting work at the Board of War.⁷

This gesture showed compassion on the part of the emperor. He was worried about the poor condition of Ruan Yuan's legs since formal imperial audiences required the official to be on his knees. With this edict, Ruan Yuan was spared having to carry an additional weight of the collar at yet another ceremonial audience.

The very next day, he reported for duty at the Grand Secretariat.

The First Day

Following practices of the Ming dynasty, grand secretaries were linked to the Hanlin Academy. In fact, almost without exception the Chinese grand secretaries had been Hanlin bachelors themselves. Therefore, they called at the Academy for certain ceremonial activities before taking up the duties of their office. Ruan Yuan had received news of his appointment while he was in Kunming so this was the first chance for him to assume office in person. Having been given earlier the privilege 'to ride horseback in the Forbidden City' (*cizi jincheng qima* 賜紫禁城騎馬), he rode in a chair carried by two men to the Hanlin Academy. This

6. Lu Yitian (陸以湑), *Lenglu Zazhi* (冷廬雜識), 1.

7. *Diziji* 7:28.

privilege of riding in the Forbidden City was never meant to be taken literally, as no animal, not even a well-trained horse of the Imperial Household, could be counted on to behave impeccably 100 percent of the time. Furthermore, officials granted this privilege were mostly elderly and infirm, so had found it difficult to mount in any case. After the Qianlong reign, such officials were carried in a small chair by two men.⁸

On the day of his inauguration, Ruan Yuan arrived at the ceremony in accordance with Board of Rites regulations.

The Hanlin Academy was situated just outside the Forbidden City, to the west of the Noon Gate. Ruan Yuan disembarked from his chair at the front entrance of the Academy, where he was met by all the professors, scholars, academicians and bachelors of the Academy then in residence.⁹ Ruan Yuan retired to a side hall to change into full court regalia as stipulated by ritual. Then, the entire entourage accompanied him into the Confucian Temple. Ruan Yuan paid homage to Confucius by performing the grand ceremony of three kneelings and nine prostrations in front of a tablet of the sage. He proceeded to the other side of the Academy compound, to the shrine of Chang Li (昌黎), where he performed a lesser ceremony of one kneeling and three prostrations. Then he retired to change into less formal clothes and moved into the main hall to receive the felicitations of the Academy. Each member gave his personal good wishes in turn, presenting a red card showing whatever special relationship he had with Ruan Yuan, such as 'student' to a 'master'. Meanwhile, tea was served.¹⁰

After the ceremony, Ruan Yuan was carried to the Grand Secretariat. There he changed into formal court dress once more, before proceeding to start his work as a grand secretary by taking a seat in the Main Hall (*datang* 大堂). He then went through the formality of visiting in turn, the Office of the Chinese-language Documents and the Office of the Manchu-language Documents, before returning again to the Main Hall. In the Main Hall there were six tables in addition to the central table. The three tables on the east were for officials to work on Manchu-language documents, the three on the west were for Chinese-language

8. *Diziji* 7:28. Also see Chen Kangqi, *Langqian Jiwen* (郎潛紀聞) 2:24; and Guan Jingming (關精明), 'Zijin Chengnei Qima' (紫禁城內騎馬), in *Ming Qing Gongting Cuwen* (明清宮廷趣聞) (1995), pp. 391–2. The same essay can also be found in *Gugong Zhanggu* (故宮掌故), edited by Liu Guilin (劉桂林) (1991), pp. 111–3.

9. The Hanlin Academy, located just outside the Forbidden City walls, was destroyed by fire in 1900. Its superb library was not saved. Subsequently, the British Legation was 'enlarged by taking in the site of the Hanlin'. In *Search of Old Peking* (1987), pp. 15–6. A magnificent Chinese woodcut of the Hanlin Academy appears on p. 17 of this book.

10. Ling Linhuang (凌林煌), *Qingdai Neige Zhidu* (清代內閣制度) (1977), p. 58.

documents. Ruan Yuan went to sit at a Chinese-language table, read a couple of documents, before receiving the homage and greetings of officials working at the Grand Secretariat.¹¹

It appears that his duties were not confined to the Grand Secretariat halls. On the next day, he went to examine archery skills of candidates for the military metropolitan examination.¹²

The Grand Secretariat

The Grand Secretariat edifice was rebuilt in 1731, after an older structure was destroyed in an earthquake the year before.¹³ This building was located in the eastern sector of the Forbidden City, the first walled compound immediately to the right of the Noon Gate. It was in the proximity of the Hanlin Academy at that time. The office comprised a spacious hall with windows in the front and back, by that time already fitted with panes of glass. At the centre of the north side of the hall there was a low square table (*ba fangzhuo* 八方桌) around which eight persons could be seated. More often than not, however, there were no more than three or four grand secretaries conducting government affairs at any given time. Each grand secretary was provided with a cushion and paper, but he had to bring his own writing implements.¹⁴ Unlike the board presidents, there was no designation of Senior or Junior for the grand secretaries. In addition, since they were seated at a table in the centre of the hall, they were addressed by their sobriquet *zhongtang* (中堂 Centre Hall).¹⁵

In theory, the Grand Secretariat was the premier office of the Qing central government, although during the Kangxi reign its power and prestige had been clipped when the emperor began to use his staff at the Imperial Study with increasing frequency.¹⁶ Since Yongzhen's time the Grand Council had wielded great influence and real power, leaving the Grand Secretariat to handle mostly routine administrative matters. From the Qianlong era onward there were three

11. The order of this ceremony is based on a description by Zeng Guofan (曾國藩) on his first day as Grand Secretary, as quoted in Yi Shi, 'Neige tan' (內閣談), *Zhonghe Monthly* I: 6 (1940), p. 184.

12. *Diziji* 7:28.

13. Ling, p. 24. A Chinese woodcut map can be found in *In Search of Old Peking*, pp. 26–7.

14. *In Search of Old Peking* (1987), pp. 26–7. When I last visited the Forbidden City in July 2002, the dilapidated building was being used as storage, 'about to be torn down', confided my guide from the Palace Museum, Mr Dong Jian-guo (董建國), a graduate of the Institute of Qing Studies, People's University.

15. Ge, p. 24.

16. Xiao Yishan, *Qingdai Tongshi* I, p. 501.

Chinese and three Manchu grand secretaries, although the numbers varied from time to time.¹⁷ During Ruan Yuan's tenure there were five in total: one Mongol, two Manchu, and two Chinese, including Ruan Yuan.¹⁸ Changling (長齡 1758–1838) was a Mongol with a distinguished ancestry. He had served in the provinces where he had dealt with issues of security and control. Muzhang'a (穆彰阿 1782–1856), a Manchu metropolitan graduate of 1805 and a Hanlin Bachelor, was regarded more highly as a scholar. The other Manchu was Wenfu (文孚 1768–1842), also a metropolitan graduate of 1796, who was remembered in history principally as a supporter of Lin Zexu (林則徐), but who had worked with Ruan Yuan in Zhejiang before. The Chinese colleague on the Grand Council was Pan Shi'en (潘世恩 1777–1854), who ranked first when he passed the metropolitan examination in 1793. Except for a stint as provincial Director of Studies in Yunnan from 1799 to 1801, his entire career was spent in the capital.

The grand secretaries were also given specific responsibilities for certain areas of state affairs. Each was to superintend (*guanli* 管理) one of the six boards. Ruan Yuan was given the superintendence first of the Board of Punishment, and later the Board of War, although, from the documents, he appeared to have been consulted on affairs affecting either or both boards as a part of the informally constituted deliberative body comprising grand secretaries, grand councillors, and other officials involved. The grand secretaries took precedence over the board presidents.¹⁹ In memorials jointly presented by the Grand Secretary Superintendent and the President of the Board of War, Ruan Yuan's name appeared first.

Deliberation Memorials

The job was not a mere sinecure, however, as several extant *yifu zouzhe* (議覆奏摺, deliberation memorials) show that Ruan Yuan was among the high capital officials consulted by the emperor. The emperor assigned Ruan Yuan and his Grand Secretariat colleagues to meet with the grand councillors and presidents of the Board of Punishment, to review a number of cases. 'These cases were many in number, too complicated and detailed to be discussed here,' wrote Ruan Yuan's son in the *Diziji*.²⁰ It was also recorded that Ruan Yuan was sent to the Board of Revenue to check on a case involving weights and measures.²¹

17. Xiao, I, p. 501.

18. Qian Shifu (錢實甫), *Qingdai Zhiguan Nianbiao* (清代職官年表) (1980), pp. 93–6.

19. Yi Shi, 'Neige Tan' (內閣談), *Zhonghe Monthly* I: 6 (1940), p. 176.

20. *Diziji* 7:30.

21. *Diziji* 7:30

Deliberation memorials represented ‘a final example’ of how ‘major policies (during the Qing) were researched and deliberated’.²² The grand secretaries, grand councillors, president of the boards concerned, and various other officials on all levels, considered each case. They read the relevant memorials. They re-examined the facts and the law, as reported by local and capital officials who had examined the case the first time around, to see whether there were errors in the decisions of the officials, and made recommendations to the emperor. Or, the deliberation officials could be examining a memorial in which the memorialist requested a decision from the emperor as to how to handle a certain issue. A few of the cases Ruan Yuan took part in the deliberation process concerned such issues as cheating on the civil service examination, vice among low-level capital officials, suspicion of tribute boat hands being members of secret societies, and assignment of arable land to troops guarding the borders. The deliberation act was to re-assure the emperor that the relevant laws had been correctly applied.

A Cheating Case

The case involving cheating on a provincial examination in Jiangxi can serve as an example to illustrate here the process of deliberation in which Ruan Yuan took part. The cheating took place at the beginning of 1836.²³ One of the readers at the examination the year before had suspected that papers submitted in the name of a candidate, Ye Zhuogui (葉卓桂), appeared to have been written by two different individuals, because the handwritings on the papers were not the same. Investigations found that indeed another person, a Sheng Sui (盛歲), already a provincial graduate, had used yet another candidate’s name to enter the examination hall, and had written some of the answers in Ye’s name. Three persons, therefore, were involved in this cheating scam, including two who were present in the examination hall, and a third who had not been present, but whose name Sheng had assumed to enter the hall. This was a case of ‘assuming someone else’s name (*dingming* 頂名) in which an experienced, usually older, essay writer entered the cell in place of the actual, more youthful candidate’.²⁴

Local and examination officials took action against the offenders. Ye was arrested and tried by the authorities immediately; Sheng a month later. Due to the seriousness of the case, the authorities sent the case to Beijing to be reviewed by the Board of Punishment.

22. Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers* (1991), p. 275.

23. YFD dated DG16/7/20 (1836/8/31). The list of officials deliberating comprised nine names, including Ruan Yuan and all other serving grand secretaries.

24. Elman, *Cultural History* (2000), p. 196.

Sheng's confession showed that the case was even more complicated. He had played the same trick before, taking examinations for somebody else under an assumed identity. His motivation was simply money. He was perpetually short of cash, and had told several friends that his services to write examination essays inside the examination hall were available for cash. Since he already passed the provincial-level examination himself and was a bona-fide provincial graduate, his credibility was not questioned. Meanwhile, Ye was asking whether such service was available and obtainable. A mutual acquaintance put the two men together, and came to a financial agreement. Ye was to pay the middleman one hundred taels for Sheng to write the essays, and the middleman was to keep twenty percent as his commission. Should Ye succeed in his quest and become a provincial graduate, he was to show further gratitude to Sheng with another one thousand taels, twenty percent of which, or two hundred taels, would go to the middleman.

In time, Ye and Sheng entered the examination hall, managing somehow to locate themselves in cubicles near each other. No direct communication took place between the men during the examination, so officials did not suspect that anything irregular was taking place. The cheaters took advantage of the confusion when candidates were milling around the examiners at the time they handed in their essays to exchange the papers. Unfortunately, Ye had handed in some of the essays he wrote himself as well as those written by Sheng. It was one of the readers who discovered the differences in handwriting, and reported the finding to the authorities. There were further complications as Ye had only paid a down payment of fifty taels, and was being hounded by the middleman to pay the remainder. The squabble over money was not considered to be pertinent to the case.

When Sheng was brought before the officials, he confessed to a previous case of cheating on examinations in Guangdong where he substituted for another candidate. As a result, the Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi, Deng Tingzhen (鄧廷楨 1776–1845), was also involved in the deliberation process. The emperor saw the memorials and instructed the Board of Punishment to consult the grand secretaries and grand councillors sitting in deliberation. All these officials, like Ruan Yuan, were experienced in handling judicial cases involving examination irregularities. They recommended to the emperor such punishments as the law specified and as the Board of Punishment had recommended. Sheng was stripped his status as a provincial graduate. All individuals involved were sent into exile as slaves to the troops on the borders. Examination officials were castigated for their carelessness in managing the examination halls.

Prestige and Honour

Keeping Vigil in the Emperor's Absence

In the meantime, Ruan Yuan was honoured by being entrusted with responsibilities for the security of the capital in the emperor's absence. When the emperor was away from Beijing, he designated high officials to 'keep vigil' in the capital to ensure that emergencies were handled all hours of day and night. When the absence was for a longer period, such as Kangxi and the Qianlong's tours to the South, for instance, or even when the emperors spent the hot months beyond the Great Wall in the summer palace in Jehol, and especially when there were serious disturbances in law and order, such as during the Taiping and Boxer Rebellions, the assignment would be of importance. For Ruan Yuan in 1837 and 1838, this assignment was routine since the world in Beijing seemed peaceful and secure. It was, however, a matter of prestige. His duties included 'taking turns spending the night in the Forbidden City' (*lunsu jincheng* 輪宿禁城).

When the Daoguang Emperor was away from the capital during the Spring Grave Sweeping Festival (Qing Ming 清明) in 1837 and 1838, Ruan Yuan was among the three or four officials appointed to remain in the Forbidden City to take care of affairs of state.²⁵ Each of the absences lasted no more than a fortnight or so, therefore Ruan Yuan's turn could not have been more than two or three nights in the Forbidden City. No adult man, except the emperor and the eunuchs, were permitted to remain inside the inner court of the Forbidden City at night. The Imperial Guards kept vigil, checking all corners of the palace grounds to ensure that all was well. Between the wall on which the Gate of Good Fortune was situated and the Inner Left Gate (Nei Zuomen 內左門), there were several suites of offices. One of the suites was for the Palace Guards; another for high officials who took turns in looking after the affairs of state.²⁶ It does not mean, however, that these senior officials actually traipsed around the palace grounds in the cold nights of early spring of the Grave Sweeping season. They supervised, or received reports from the Guard officers that the security of the palace had not been breached and that all was well outside the palace grounds as well.

In 1837, at the behest of the Dowager Empress, the Daoguang Emperor visited the Western Tombs (Xi Ling 西陵) where his father and mother were interred, to 'offer incense'.²⁷ Other officials assigned with Ruan Yuan to 'keep

25. *Diziji* 7:31; *Qing Shilu* DG295:2.

26. These offices were located on the wall outside the Gate of Purity, opposite the Grand Council. When I last visited the Forbidden City in late April 2005, these suite of offices had been turned into a Starbuck's.

27. It is not clear from the documents whether the Dowager Empress herself also went.

vigil' in the capital were the Prince Tun (惲親王 1795–1839), a younger half-brother of the emperor; Changling, Grand Secretary who was to be granted a dukedom with the designation 'Majestic and Brave Duke' (Duke Weiyong 威勇公) with rights of perpetual inheritance for his descendants at his retirement a year later; and Tang Jingzhao (湯金釗 1772–1856), President of the Board of Civil Appointments.²⁸ The company alone was prestigious indeed for Ruan Yuan, although he, too, held offices of equal rank. In 1838, the emperor accompanied the Dowager Empress to visit the Western Tombs, leaving the capital on 10 April 1838 (DG 18/3/16) and returning to the Forbidden City on 23 April 1838 (DG 18/3/29), an absence of thirteen days in total.²⁹ Ruan Yuan's companions during this period were two imperial princes, the Prince Tun, and the Prince Su (肅親王), a half brother and a cousin of the emperor, respectively, and Yi Jing (奕經), an imperial clansman of the Bordered Red Banner, President of the Board of Civil Appointments, concurrently serving as General Commandant of the Metropolitan Armed Forces.³⁰ Again, this was distinguished company. Moreover, records show that Ruan Yuan was singled out to 'take turns' with the princes in 'keeping vigil throughout the night' in the 'inner' Forbidden City.³¹ Records also show that during the imperial absence, the officials actually did some work. They issued instructions on such affairs as the transportation of copper and lead ores from Yunnan to Hubei and the area south of the Yangzi, the purchase of rice for local granaries, a case of house-breaking in Beijing, and a case rewarding officials who caught opium smugglers in Zhili.³²

Apparently Ruan Yuan was not well during this period. His face was swollen, as were his legs. Immediately upon his return, the emperor granted Ruan Yuan a month's leave of absence on account of illness.³³

Presenting Scroll to the Dowager Empress

One of the responsibilities of the Grand Secretariat during the Qing was the drafting of honorary titles for the imperial ancestors, including living dowager empresses, the granting of which was usually accompanied by elaborate court

28. *Qing Shilu*, DG295:2a-b.

29. *Qing Shilu*, DG307:14-21; *Diziji* 7:32.

30. *Diziji* 7:32.

31. *Jiaqing Daoguang Liangchao Shangyu Dang* (嘉慶道光兩朝上諭檔) in the collection of Qing documents in the First Historical Archives, Guilin: Guangxi Teachers University, 2000, vol. 42, p. 67.

32. *Jiaqing Daoguang Liang chao Shangyu Dang*, p. 69.

33. *Diziji* 7:32.

ceremonies and lengthy essays of praise.³⁴ The first time Ruan Yuan took part in such a court ceremony as a high and venerated official in the presence of the emperor was on 29 November 1935 (DG15/10/10). The occasion was the sixtieth *sui* birthday of the Dowager Empress Xiaohe (孝和 1776–1850). Without any doubt she was the most important woman in the Forbidden City at that time. She had been the second-ranking consort of the Jiaqing Emperor when he was a prince and was made empress when his principal wife, the mother of Daoguang, died after he became emperor. When the Jiaqing Emperor died in Jehol in 1820, it was she who confirmed the succession of the Prince Min Ning (旻寧) to his father's throne before the will was officially opened.³⁵ The new emperor honoured her with the title Dowager Empress in 1821 and assigned to her as her residence the Palace of Longevity and Health (Shoukang Gong 壽康宮), a principal edifice in the inner Forbidden City.³⁶ She had come from a distinguished family. Her ancestor, Eidu (額亦都 1562–1621), whose second son was married to a daughter of Nurhaci, was an important member of the Nihuru clan. Her father had served as President of the Board of Civil Appointments under the Qianlong Emperor and her brother was Duke He-shi-tai (和世泰), who incidentally was the individual who made arrangements for the Amherst Embassy to see the Jiaqing Emperor in 1816 without ascertaining first what the British would consider to be proper protocol. The audience never took place.

In celebration of her sixtieth *sui* birthday, the emperor donned his formal court regalia, went first to the Hall of Central Harmony (Zhonghe Dian 中和殿) to read aloud a congratulatory memorial. He then mounted a cart, rode through the Right Wing Gate (Youyi Men 右翼門), to the Left Eternal Health Gate (Yongkang Zoumen 永康左門) where he disembarked. Carrying the memorial in both his hands, the emperor was attended by all the Mongol and imperial princes, grand secretaries and grand councillors. After the emperor presented his message and gifts, the retinue jointly gave her a court sceptre.³⁷ It was an honour for the officials to be allowed to take part in this family celebration. For Ruan Yuan this honour was even more celebrated, because he was 'deputized' by the emperor to write a congratulatory message when she was presented with an honorary 14-character honorary title. In this title the Dowager Empress was glorified by such adjectives as 'kind, healthy, beautiful, wise, long-living, dignified,

34. Cui Zhi (崔陟), *Zhongguo Gongting Shenghe* (中國宮廷生活) (1996), p. 17.

35. For this colourful version of what is essentially a similar tale as the official biography, see Jin Shengbin (晉聖斌), *Jiaqingdi Houfei Chuanqi* (嘉慶帝后妃傳奇) (2001), pp. 202–14.

36. Traditionally, this was the residence for the emperor's mother.

37. *Qing Shilu* DG272:66–7.

and exultant'.³⁸ In return, the Dowager Empress thanked Ruan Yuan by giving him a length of dress material and silk purses.³⁹

Representing the Emperor at the Western Tombs

Two months later, the emperor sent Ruan Yuan and Changling to the Western Tombs to offer sacrifices on his behalf in front of the not yet interred casket of the late Empress Xiaoshen (孝慎).⁴⁰ She was the second wife of Daoguang and was a daughter of a hereditary duke of the Dongjia Clan. She married the emperor when he was Prince Min Ning after the death of his first wife and was made Empress when he ascended to the throne in 1821. They had one daughter who died when she was seven *sui*. The child was buried in the Eastern Tombs with three siblings who did not survive beyond childhood.⁴¹ The empress died in 1833. Following ritual practices of that time, she was not to be interred until the death of her husband hence her remains had been reposing at one of the chapels outside the city of Beijing. The emperor asked Ruan Yuan to make sure that the Chinese characters carved on her spiritual tablet were correct; and Changling to make sure that the Manchu characters on the tablet contained no error.

Spring Festival in the Forbidden City

The First Day

On the first day of each lunar year, the Spring Festival, the emperor, in new hat and robe, held court in the Palace of Heavenly Purity where he received the imperial princes, members of the nobility and high officials then in Beijing, and accepted their greetings. The high officials comprised the grand councillors, grand secretaries, presidents and vice presidents of the boards, and other military

38. The biography of the empress can be found in *Qing Shi* (清史), compiled by Zhang Qiyun (張其鈞) (1962), pp. 3498–9. She died at the age of seventy-four *sui* and was buried in the Western Tomb with the Jiaqing Emperor. Documents on imperial tombs are at the First Historical Archives in Beijing. See *Zhongguo Diyi Lishi Dangan Guan Guancang Dangan Gaishu* (中國第一歷史檔案館藏檔案概述) (1985), p. 90.

39. *Diziji* 7:28.

40. *Qing Shilu* DG272:2. The biography of the empress can be found in *Qing Shi* (1962), p. 3499. See also *Qingshi Biannian* (清史編年) [Chronology of Qing history], compiled by the Institute of Qing History (2000), vol. 8.

41. Yu Shanpu (俞善浦), *Qing Dongling Daguan* (清東陵大觀) (1985), pp. 207–8.

and civil officials the emperor chose to include in this ceremony.⁴² He also gave them their presents. Ruan Konghou noted that the emperors had ‘honoured’ his father with so many gifts throughout the years that they were ‘too many to enumerate’.⁴³ Ruan Yuan, however, kept track. He remembered ‘on the Spring Festival the Emperor honoured me with presents such as jade objects, festival lanterns, ink stones, and silk gowns’.⁴⁴ He had the pieces of red paper with imperial writings on them mounted on wooden boards, and hung them from the rafters in his family shrine in Yangzhou.

Each year since the early Jiaqing reign, whether Ruan Yuan attended in person, he received calligraphy written by the emperor, the characters of ‘Good Fortune’ (*fu* 福) and ‘Longevity’ (*shou* 壽), usually written on red paper about twenty inches by twenty inches with brush dipped in black ink. The emperor did not just casually hand out his calligraphy to the selected officials. There was prescribed ritual on this seemingly minor show of largess on the part of the ruler. Zhaolian described the ceremony:

The ceremony took place in a small room of the Palace of Heavenly Purity. The emperor sat at his desk and wrote (whatever character such as *fu*) while the official about to receive this largess knelt. The emperor handed the finished calligraphy to the official, who received it with a prostration. Then he carried the calligraphy out of the room, with attitude of great reverence, to show ‘how much he had valued this imperial favour’.⁴⁵

The Manchu Rite of New Year Sacrifice

Also on the first day of the year, a Manchu-style rite was held at the Palace of Earthly Tranquillity (Kunning Gong 坤寧宮). This rite, called Sacrificial Offering (*jisi* 祭祀) since it involved a ritual dance by women priests as well as the slaughtering of animals, was known colloquially as Ritual Dance (*tiaoshen* 跳神).⁴⁶ The Ritual Dance was to offer sacrifices to ancestors beyond the great grandfather’s generation.⁴⁷ This ceremony was definitely not a part of the Confucian ritual practised by the state, but a shamanistic ritual practised by the Manchu emperor. A specially shaped incense was burned since the Manchus

42. Imperial Diary (*Qiju zhu* 起居注) cited in *Gongzhong de Niansu* (宮中的年俗) [New year customs in the Forbidden City], in *Qingshi Shiyi* (清史拾遺) by Zhuang Jifa (1992), pp. 167–70.

43. *Diziji* 7: 30b.

44. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 6:1.

45. Zhaolian, *Xiaoting Xulu* (嘯亭續錄), Supplement 1, p. 376.

46. See Liu Housheng (劉厚生), *Qingdai Gongting Saman Jisi Yanjiu* (清代宮廷薩滿祭祀研究) (1992).

47. Fu Ge, p. 138.

did not ‘use incense sticks when they venerated their ancestors’.⁴⁸ This ritual took place several times every year, at the beginning of each season, but the one held at the Spring Festival was the most important as it signified the start of a new year. They used the same rite as those before they became rulers.⁴⁹ As Manchu rites involving ancestral spirits must take place at a central location, when they became rulers in the Forbidden City, the ceremonies took place in the Kunming Palace, where the emperor and empress passed their wedding night. The ancestral portraits were hung on the western wall of the palace. On the eastern side there was a long table where the animals were slaughtered. Three large cauldrons were placed at the back of the room, where a stove was located, to cook the sacrificial meat.

Partaking the Sacrificial Meat

High officials in the capital, like Ruan Yuan, however, were not invited to the banquet to partake the sacrificial meats until the day after.⁵⁰ Guests at the banquet comprised the Mongol and imperial princes, the grand secretaries, the grand councillors, the presidents of the six boards, and any other high official then in the capital the emperor wanted to invite. They were called to partake the meat of the sacrificed animal.⁵¹ When Ruan Yuan and his colleagues in full court regalia entered from the south, the Daoguang Emperor was seated in the north. First the officials performed the prostrations to the gods, then to the emperor.

The banquet began as the sacrificial officials brought in the animal on a silver platter. They first presented the platter to the emperor on their knees. The emperor himself cut off a piece with a knife. The officials offered him tea, performed the three kneelings and nine prostrations before they withdrew. The emperor departed before the princes and the officials were served. What was even more interesting was the fact that the officials took home pieces of the sacrificial meat with them.

The Legalization of Opium Trade Question

To the officials in Canton in the 1830s, the opium problem had taken on an economic significance. As imports increased, a number of officials sought to adopt measures to remedy the drain of silver by legalizing its importation and

48. Fu Ge, p. 138.

49. Zhaolian, *Xiaoting Zalu* (嘯亭雜錄), 9.

50. *Xiaoting Xulu* (嘯亭續錄), Supplement 1.

51. From all accounts, the animal used in such sacrifices was the pig; *Diziji* 8.

cultivation, and to tax it as medicine. With Ruan Yuan's wide connections to hundreds of scholars, among them officials and academicians, his name was linked to almost all the known proponents of this proposal to change the policy of prohibition. There is no writing directly connecting Ruan Yuan to this movement, yet, contemporary speculations on the part of the British have led to otherwise unsubstantiated conclusion that he was behind this movement, if not its mastermind.⁵² However, there is convincing evidence that the movement had originated as academic discourses at the Xuehaitang in Canton, which was founded by Ruan Yuan. His name was identified with the academy. The *hong* merchants, who would be extremely interested in legalizing the commodity, were close to scholars at the Academy. At least they were funding a number of publications by the scholars.⁵³ Whether *hong* merchants had attempted to influence the thinking of these scholars is not a matter of record. Perhaps they took it for granted that whatever they had wished would be transmitted to Ruan Yuan, who was at court at the time the legalization memorial was submitted. How strong the movement actually was, or indeed whether it was a movement at all, is not a part of my consideration here. My concern is whether Ruan Yuan played any role in this proposal. It should be noted that Ruan Yuan left Canton in 1826, ten years before the submission of the legalization memorial.

Ruan Yuan was not a part of the opium smuggling network, but perhaps his successors were.⁵⁴ In any case, the scholars and officials whose names were involved in this movement: Xu Naiji (許乃濟), Bao Shichen (包世臣), Wu Lanxiu (吳蘭修) and He Taiqing (何泰清), were all associated with Ruan Yuan from the early years of his career. In addition, Lu Kun (盧坤), the Governor-General at Canton during the Napir crisis, was also known to be a 'student' of Ruan Yuan. Ruan Yuan had enforced the anti-opium regulations when he was at Canton. It is generally accepted that he might have kept down the quantity of importation,

52. Hsin-pao Chang, in *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War* (1964), discovered a statement in an English-language publication that Ruan Yuan had suggested and would support the proposal to abolish the opium prohibition laws, and had taken this piece of British wishful thinking to be fact. Subsequently, historians working in English, including Wakeman, Fay, Polachek, and Elman, accepted Chang's view. Peter Fay, *The Opium War* (1975); Wakeman, 'Canton Trade and the Opium War', in *CHOC* (1979); James Polachek, *The Inner Opium War* (1992); and Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology* (2001 edition).

53. The House of Howqua, for instance, funded the publication of a major collection of works, including Ruan Yuan's, in *Yueyatang Congshu* (粵雅堂叢書), published in the 1850s, after the Opium War.

54. 'Report from Committees on China Trade: East India Company', *Parliamentary Papers*, 22 August 1840, VII: 713. During the period Ruan Yuan was at Canton, 'the highest officials at Canton were not involved in the smuggling activities'.

but had not stopped its flow through Lintin.⁵⁵ The quantity as well as value of opium import had been rising even more dramatically after his departure. Annual figures based on Indian export statistics kept by H. B. Morse show that even during the years of strict enforcement of the anti-opium regulations, imports were on the rise. After Ruan Yuan left Canton in 1827, opium imports soared even more visibly.

Table 12.1 British opium figures, 1817–33⁵⁶

Season	Total Import at Canton (including Macao and Lintin)		Export from Bengal/Bombay	Governor-General at Canton
	Quantity (chests) ⁵⁷	Value (Sp dollars)	Quantity (chests)	
1816–7	3,210	3,657,000	4,618	Jiang Yuxian
1817–8	3,680	3,904,250	3,692	Ruan Yuan fr Oct
1818–9	4,580	4,159,250	3,552	Ruan Yuan
1819–20	4,600	5,583,200	4,006	Ruan Yuan
1820–1	4,779	8,400,800	4,244	Ruan Yuan
1821–2	4,628	8,314,600	5,576	Ruan Yuan
1822–3	5,822	7,988,930	7,773	Ruan Yuan
1823–4	7,082	8,515,100	8,895	Ruan Yuan
1824–5	8,655	7,619,625	12,023	Ruan Yuan
1825–6	9,621	7,608,205	9,373	Ruan Yuan
1826–7	9,969	9,610,085	12,175	Li Hongbing fr July
1827–8	9,475	10,356,833	11,154	Li Hongbing
1828–9	13,131	12,503,115	15,418	Li Hongbing
1829–30	14,000	12,957,157	16,877	Li Hongbing
1830–1	18,760	12,900,031	17,456	Li Hongbing
1831–2	13,593	10,931,695	22,138	Li Hongbing
1832–3	23,570	15,332,759	19,483	Lu Kun fr Sept
1833–4	19,786	14,956,540	23,902	Lu Kun
1834–5	16,516	9,653,970	21,011	Lu Kun
1835–6	26,200	17,388,622	30,202	Deng Tingzhen

55. Elman actually concluded that it was Ruan Yuan's strict enforcement of the anti-opium policy that created the smuggling network through Lintin, since it 'was never designed to be implemented very thoroughly'. See *From Philosophy to Philology* (2001 edition), p. 283, note 18.

56. All figures are taken from Chang, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War* (1964), pp. 222–3, Appendix B. In his introduction to these statistics, Chang wrote: 'Opium tables often differ from one another. The discrepancy usually arises from different statistical bases.' I have chosen to stop at 1836, when Xu Naiji submitted his memorial. The figures do not include American imports.

57. The net weight of each chest of opium was not less than a picul = 100 catties.

Xu Naiji's Memorial

In 1836, Xu Naiji, then in Beijing as Sub-Director of the Court of Sacrificial Worship, submitted a memorial to the emperor proposing that the existing policy against opium be abandoned.⁵⁸ Yes, opium smoking was debilitating, and wasteful in moral and monetary terms, reasoned Xu. Yet, strict enforcement of the anti-opium laws had not stopped its importation or widespread use. Smuggling and black-marketing of opium, meanwhile, encouraged the growth of criminal elements while the government was deprived of tax revenue. Therefore, except for prohibiting serving soldiers in its use, the government might as well let the drifters go their own way. Xu further argued that, since opium was contraband, payment had to be made in silver, resulting in uncontrolled drain of bullion from the country. He proposed to barter opium import with tea, and to allow controlled domestic cultivation of poppies.⁵⁹ His arguments were that the market could not support both imported and domestic opium. Since domestic product was less harmful than imported opium, placing a high tariff on imports would make the latter so expensive that addicts would turn to domestic opium, and eventually stop smoking altogether.⁶⁰

It was general knowledge among twentieth-century Opium War historians anxious to link Xu with Ruan Yuan that Xu was a metropolitan graduate of 1799. Ruan Yuan was an assistant examiner that year, hence Xu was known as a 'student' of Ruan Yuan. Lesser known and not mentioned was another, perhaps even closer, association between the two men. Xu was one of the scholars of Zhejiang Ruan Yuan took into the Gujing Academy in Hangzhou.⁶¹

Apparently Xu's memorial was an accumulation of discussions for almost a decade among scholars, many associated with the Xuehaitang in Canton, founded by Ruan Yuan in 1820. Bao Shichen (包世臣), a metropolitan graduate of 1808, was the first to link opium import with the outflow of bullion. In 1820, he wrote an essay on the increased inflow of opium despite its prohibition and, as a corollary, the outflow of silver.⁶² Ruan Yuan, who was in the seat of authority at Canton at that time, and who knew Bao,⁶³ did not take up this point of view. He

58. *Chouban Yiwu Shimu* (籌辦夷務始末) I:1–4. See also Chang Hsin-pao, *Commissioner Lin* (1964), pp. 85–9.

59. I am not sure how much Xu understood market economics.

60. No scientific basis has been offered for this assertion.

61. *Diziji* 2:2b. Xu was one of four brothers from Zhejiang, all of whom attained to the metropolitan graduate status. Two brothers were appointed to the Gujing Academy by Ruan Yuan in 1801.

62. Bao as cited in Xiao Zhizhi (蕭致治) and Yang Weidong (楊衛東) (eds.), *Yapian Zhanzheng Qian Zhongxi Guanxi Jishi 1517–1840* (鴉片戰爭前中西關係紀事) (1986), pp. 325–6.

63. Bao had served on the staff of Zhu Gui who died in 1808. There is no record showing that Bao and Ruan Yuan had seen each other since then.

continued to enforce the prohibition regulations by pressuring the British traders through their agents, the *hong* merchants. It was a censor in Guizhou, Huang Zhongmo (黃中模), who called the emperor's attention to the fact that legal or not, opium was being imported. Since it had to be paid with silver, the outflow of silver from China was considerable.⁶⁴ In 1821, the emperor called Ruan Yuan to Beijing, discussed matters involving the British in Canton, and issued even more stringent anti-opium measures, but that was fifteen years previously.

Meanwhile, scholars at the Xuehaitang continued to debate the opium and silver issue. In the 1830s, Wu Lanxiu, a metropolitan graduate of 1808 and a classmate of Bao Shichen, was a director of the academy. Bao was in Canton from 1826 as a 'temporary' employee in the Hoppo's Office.⁶⁵ Proponents among modern historians that this legalization push had originated at the Xuehaitang surmised that Bao must have had contact with the academy during his tenure in the city. Perhaps this supposition was the basis of a rumour circulated among the *hong* merchants and foreign traders that the opium trade was about to be legalized.⁶⁶ A series of discourses on the opium and silver issue, written by the scholars at the Xuehaitang, was translated into English at that time, presumably at the behest of the *hong* merchants, who made them available to the opium traders. Hence the speculation arose that opium trade was about to be legalized.⁶⁷ The Xuehaitang was closely identified with Ruan Yuan, and Ruan Yuan was known to the *hong* merchants as well as the British traders. He had left Canton in 1826, therefore unlikely a part of the debate. We do not know what the scholars told the *hong* merchants, but it is reasonable to conjecture that they dropped illustrious names. When Ruan Yuan was transferred to Beijing in 1835, the British were hopeful. They cheered Xu Naiji's memorial.

There is reason to believe that the author of the national policy advocated in these papers (memorials from the governor-general and governor at Canton reprinted in *The Chinese Repository* was the great minister Yuan Yuan (*sic*), formerly governor (*sic*) of these provinces ...⁶⁸

64. Xiao and Yang, pp. 325–6. For the memorial, see *Waijiao Shiliao DG*, 13b–15.

65. Momose, 'Biography of Pao Shih-ch'en (Bao Shichen)', in *ECCP*, p. 610. How long he stayed on the job was not specified, but the job placed him in Canton.

66. Testimony of William Jardine to Committee on China Trade, *Parliamentary Papers* 30: 218.

67. Alain Le Pichon, who is working on Jardine's correspondence (2004), told me that in the Jardine Archives at Cambridge, there is a number of papers on legalization of opium, translated from the Chinese. Opium trade was not legalized until after the Second Opium War by the Treaty of Tianjin, 1858.

68. *Chinese Repository* XI:406.

Here again circumstantial evidence pointed to Ruan Yuan. He Taiqing (何太青), a metropolitan graduate of 1799, the year Ruan Yuan was an examination official, was in retirement at home in Shunde (順德), within commuting distance to Canton and the Academy. His classmate, Xu Naiji, was a circuit intendant in Guangdong and, for about a year in 1832–3, also served as Acting Judicial Commissioner.⁶⁹ These men studied seriously the problem involving opium import and silver outflow. Import in 1833 was more than 20,000 chests, resulting in an outflow estimated by Wu to be more than 15,000,000 dollars.⁷⁰ It should be noted here that these discussions were taking place in 1832–3. It should also be noted that Ruan Yuan founded the Xuehaitang in 1820, and, although he had kept up with the scholars, he had been gone from Canton since 1826.

In 1834–5, another name connected with Ruan Yuan was added to the literature of the opium and silver question. Lu Kun was Governor-General at Canton from October 1832 until his death in October 1835. In 1834 the British ended the monopoly of the East India Company and appointed Lord Napier to Canton, to replace the authority of the Company. Lu sent a memorial to the emperor on 25 February 1835 (DG15/1/28). Historians have understood that Lu Kun recommended to the emperor ‘a shift into a more compromising policy, pending a gradual prohibition plan’,⁷¹ although the wording of the memorial did not so indicate. Lu Kun was offended by the liberty taken by Napier in arriving at the British factory in Canton without waiting in Macao for Chinese authorization. He withdrew all Chinese employees from the factory and withheld all supplies. At a later time, Ruan Yuan was to speak of this action by Lu Kun as consistent with his own earlier when he stopped British trade in Canton in 1822, leading to British withdrawal of naval ships from Chinese waters in 1823 (see Chapter 6). The memorial, subsequently known as ‘Eight additional regulations in defence against barbarians’ (Zeng Fangyi Xigui Batiao, 增防夷新規八條), had reiterated the strengthening of the forts in the Pearl Estuary and in controlling British traders by increasing pressure on the *hong* merchants, again consistent with earlier Ruan Yuan policies.⁷²

In 1835, Ruan Yuan was transferred to Beijing. He was Grand Secretary with responsibilities for the Board of War. He was occupied with honorary and real tasks.⁷³ He was also confronting a number of health issues. Facts were that, after

69. Qian Shifu, *Qingdai Zhiguan Nian Biao* II:2137–8.

70. Xiao and Yang, p. 381. For figures of the East India Company given by H. B. Morse, see *Chronicles of East India Company Trade with China* (1926–9), table 12.1.

71. Frederic Wakeman Jr., ‘The Canton Trade and the Opium War’, in *CHOC* 10, p. 185, note 27.

72. Liang, *Langji Congtan* (浪跡叢談), 2.

73. See *Diziji* J: 23b–37b. Ruan Yuan requested and received sick leave several times during this period.

receiving the Xu memorial, ‘the emperor promptly asked high officials to ponder the question and sat back to listen to the debate which was to go on, in one form or another, for the next two years’.⁷⁴ Ruan Yuan must have been among these high officials consulted. There is no documentary evidence for such a consultation, but it was unlikely that the Daoguang Emperor would ignore the advice of a high official with first-hand experience on this issue. When Xu submitted the memorial in 1836 (DG16), noted in the *Veritable Records* 1836/6/12, Ruan Yuan was at the Forbidden City. From 2–8 June he was a Palace Examination Reader. As it transpired, the emperor turned down the proposal. There is no mention in any official document, or any private papers used in this study or cited by any scholar dealing with this question, of what position Ruan Yuan took. When Ruan Yuan chatted with Liang Zhangju on the opium issue in 1841, he talked about the actions he took when he was at Canton, but did not even mention Xu Naiji or his memorial.

At any rate, foreign traders in Canton were wishful in thinking that Ruan Yuan’s presence in the capital was to their benefit.

There is ... in the imperial cabinet at Peking, one minister of the highest talent and character, who has resided several years at Canton, and who has been in actual collision with the foreigners here. The knowledge is of value during the present state of affairs between the British and Chinese authorities. We may assume from this circumstance that the policy of the imperial government with respect to the foreign trade, is adopted advisedly and deliberately, and that it will not be readily changed or abandoned.⁷⁵

The issue here is whether Ruan Yuan was behind this movement, or indeed had supported Xu Naiji, as contemporary British and later historians had intimated.⁷⁶ I have found nothing to give any credibility to this assertion.

Ruan Yuan’s Stand on Opium

Besides his stand in Canton, he took measures to curb the cultivation of poppies in Yunnan and Guizhou. He sent a memorial to the Daoguang Emperor in 1827 that twice a year he ordered officials to inspect the fields, where minority tribes

74. Wakeman, *CHOC* 10, pp. 180–1. The years were 1836–8.

75. *Chinese Repository* IV: 72 (June 1835).

76. See, for instance, *The Inner Opium War* (1992), p. 113. Polachek wrote Lu Kun ‘had already been pressing hard for (the liberalization of anti-opium policy) before he died in late 1835. His idea ... was to be picked up and renewed by Lu’s bureaucratic and examination-system mentor, Juan Yuan, early in 1836, and it was to be strongly supported by Lu’s successor in office, Teng T’ing-chen.’

grew poppies: once at planting time and another at harvest time. The emperor had written back: 'Your policy of inspections sounds good, but, unless the inspectors are thorough, the act of inspection may prove to be useless.'⁷⁷

Ruan Yuan's own words on the opium issue, quoted by Liang Zhangju, showed his inflexible attitude against opium. These words, referring to the stoppage of trade in 1823, were significant.

When I stopped the British trade, my concerns were not the loss of customs revenue. My principles were, and have always been: National interests should always take precedence over customs revenue.⁷⁸

They show his awareness of the economic argument for legalizing the opium trade, but did not accept this argument as a substitute for the existing policy against opium trade and usage.

His contributions lay in calling attention to the opium import, and in devising a new way to combat what he considered to be evil and illegal, by pressuring Chinese merchants, including destroying opium in 1822 in Macao. Ruan Yuan's policy of seize and destroy was followed by Lin Zexu later. Ruan Yuan further put pressure on the British through the *hong* merchants. He humiliated Howqua by removing his button when opium was involved.

Furthermore, modern Chinese historians on the opium question, Xiao and Yang, also drew the conclusion that since 1821 Ruan Yuan had been a strong antagonist to opium. His reasons were at that time opium was a poison smuggled into the interior, harmful to the people and detrimental to law of the land.

From my findings, it is clear that Ruan Yuan had no role in proposing to legalize opium — trade or usage. If indeed he had understood the economic impact of opium, it was not on his mind.

Concluding Comments

All evidences connecting Ruan Yuan to the legalization movement, therefore, were at best circumstantial. It was a matter of guilt by association, so to speak. British sources were wishful thinking, and Chang's 'discovery of contemporary materials' gave rise to modern historians writing in English attributing a role to Ruan Yuan where none exists. Nobody has made a note on any influence the *hong* merchants might have exerted on the Xuehaitang scholars. They had a cordial relationship — books sponsored by the House of Howqua, such as the

77. Xiao and Yang, vol. 1, pp. 438–9.

78. Liang, *Langji Congtan*, p. 10.

major collection 130 titles of publications, *Yueyatang Congshu* (粵雅堂叢書), printed successively from 1849 to 1885. The *hong* merchants could also be the conduit of information: opium data to the scholars and favourable reaction to the merchants. But, despite circumstantial evidence offered by twentieth-century historians, from my findings, Ruan Yuan was not behind the legalization movement.

Meanwhile, his health continued to deteriorate, leading to his return to Yangzhou in 1838. He was then seventy-five years of age and, from the time he passed the Metropolitan Examination in 1789, had served as a government official for close to fifty years.

13

The Golden Years: Retirement in Yangzhou, 1838–49

After repeated requests to the Daoguang Emperor, Ruan Yuan was finally permitted to retire on 4 July 1838. An imperial edict was issued, awarding him the honorary title of Grand Tutor to the Heir Apparent (Taizi Taibao 太子太保) and a pension of half-pay.¹

For 50 years Grand Secretary Ruan Yuan has served competently and with integrity for the benefit of the country as well as the foreigners who had come to trade and reside within these shores. Now in poor health, he has repeatedly requested to be relieved of his government responsibilities. Permission is hereby granted for him to retire at half-pay. He has informed me of the date of his departure from the capital. With deep affection, I am awarding him the title Grand Tutor of the Heir Apparent. I send him my best wishes for a serene retirement in the hope that he will return to the capital to help me celebrate my sixtieth *sui* birthday.²

Younger colleagues asked why Ruan Yuan had made up his mind to retire at that time. They wanted to know whether his health was deteriorating. Ruan Yuan replied.

I am not suffering any life-threatening disease or serious pain, but my increasing forgetfulness is becoming a problem. I experience a shortness of breath from time to time, lately of such increasing frequency that it appears as if I were gasping all the time. Both my knees are weak, so I cannot kneel. Should I be called to the imperial presence, I would not be able to observe the proper etiquette by kneeling.³

He regretted that he was not able to bid the emperor farewell in person. 'I am so sorry that I cannot see the emperor before I go. My right foot is in such poor condition that I can hardly walk.'⁴

1. Half-pay means half of the annual salary of a rank 1A official, which was one hundred and eighty taels, therefore ninety taels.

2. As quoted in *Diziji*, 7:36.

3. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 3:12b–13.

4. *Diziji* 7:35.

The Return Journey

Ruan Yuan left Beijing for the last time on 12 October 1838, a fortnight after the Mid-Autumn Festival that year, three months after he received permission to retire. Travelling by water, he boarded his boat at Tongzhou (通州), and arrived at Yangzhou on 30 November. The journey by canal was leisurely. Family tradition maintained that the departure was delayed because Ruan Yuan had to raise enough cash for the journey.⁵ The story connected with these family legends is interesting, but perhaps apocryphal. The fact that Ruan Yuan owned a craft (*hongchuan* 紅船) has been established. Liang Zhangju has written that ‘the safest boat on the rivers today is that owned by Ruan Yuntai (Ruan Yuan’s *hao*), built when he was Governor of Jiangxi’.⁶ So the delay in Ruan Yuan’s departure was not due to the need to make arrangement for transportation. It was more likely on account of the travellers trying to avoid the summer heat. With his advanced age and poor health, his sons probably considered it wiser for him to wait for cooler weather before embarking on this arduous journey. They could also be waiting for a more auspicious date. Family legend, however, insisted that Ruan Yuan’s sons and personal staff felt that a single boat did not make an impressive enough homecoming after fifty years of government service. To provide for a more elegant triumphal return (*yijin huanxiang* 衣錦還鄉), they loaded several other boats with eighty wooden crates filled with bricks, to create the illusion that Ruan Yuan had amassed a fortune in silver and gold ingots.⁷

When the emperor learned of the boats loaded with bullion, so the story continued, he sent a messenger to Ruan Yuan to tell him to exercise some discretion in transporting the spoils from his office home. When Ruan Yuan denied the existence of such a private fortune and the emperor discovered the ruse, he was supposed to have exclaimed, ‘I am so grateful to have had the service of such an honest man!’⁸ Thereupon, he assigned sixty-one small islets in the lower Yangzi off the coast of Yangzhou to Ruan Yuan and his descendants in perpetuity. These were the islands that produced reed, which, when dried, was the major source of fuel in the area. The emperor also gave him the river port of Shier Yu (十二圩), located between Yizheng and Pukou (浦口), on the north bank of the river. The revenue from the port and its facilities were to go to Ruan

5. Letter from Ruan Xixiang (阮錫祥), dated October 1978. Ruan, who operated a business at the Grand Hotel in Taipei in the 1970s, was born and reared in the house at Wenxuan Lane.

6. Liang Zhangju, *Langji Congtan* (Taipei, 1974 edition), p. 781.

7. Letter from Ruan Xixiang.

8. Letter from Ruan Xixiang.

Yuan and his descendants in perpetuity.⁹ There is no documentary evidence to authenticate the story of the bricks, but as late as 1949, one hundred years after Ruan Yuan's death, his descendants still collected rents on the port and the small islands.¹⁰ All sixty-one islets, with blades of green reed carefully drawn and the name of each island clearly labelled, as well as the port, can be located on a Qing dynasty map of the Lower Yangzi in the collection of the Peiping Library, now at the National Palace Museum.¹¹ Ruan Yuan's records show that at least some of these islands, or similar ones, were purchased by him earlier, but there was no mention of him buying the port.

At Home

In theory, Ruan Yuan should be able to enjoy his leisurely retirement. Although physically weakened and increasingly showing signs of ageing, he was still mentally alert. His hands remained steady as his calligraphy of that time still showed strength. He continued to write. An additional supplement to *Yanjing Shiji*, filled with articles of reminiscences, was ready for printing in 1841. His chronological biography, *Leitang Anzhu Diziji*, was completed, with the exception of the final chapter recording his death and the eulogies. He remained active in literary activities, gathering around him a small group of younger scholars, including Liu Wenqi. Liu was born and brought up in Yangzhou, had studied under Ruan Yuan, but did not pass the provincial examination. His maternal uncle was Ling Shu (凌燭 1775–1829), who had served on Ruan Yuan's staff. In his chronological biography, Liu recorded the titles of all the works he wrote at Ruan Yuan's behest, in his own or Ruan Yuan's name. In fact, it had been a long time since Ruan Yuan wrote works that carried his name as compiler, editor, or author, but his style in handling the conceptualization and the final approval of the publication continued.

By that time he was a man of property. He owned homes in the western sector of the City of Yangzhou. In 1838, the condition of Ruan Yuan's legs was so poor that he was no longer able to walk on his own. At home he was carried in a chair, and when he went out he rode a small cart, greeting neighbours and townsmen with both hands folded together (*gongshou* 拱手) in a friendly but polite gesture. When he first returned to Yangzhou, he lived in a house on Tenth

9. Letter from Ruan Xixiang.

10. Letter from Ruan Xixiang. Also see letter from Wang Yigong.

11. *Changjiang Xialiu Tu* (長江下流圖) [Map of the lower Yangzi], watercolour on silk, at National Palace Museum.

Lane (Shixiang 十巷) inside the city wall. He had named the house Hall of Good Fortune and Longevity (Fushou Ting 福壽庭).¹² For special holidays and festivals, he continued to visit the clan temple and the country cottage at Gongdao Bridge. The town house did not live up to its name; it was destroyed by fire in 1843 when Ruan Yuan was in the country. His entire library, including books lent to him by others, were lost.¹³ Ruan Yuan wrote a year after the fire:

After the house burned down I could not afford to have it rebuilt. I still do not have the nerve even to visit the site. The few rooms that were still habitable I gave to Old Man Wu of the Print Shop to be used to store his tools. The other rooms which are so damaged I gave to the gardeners so they can continue to grow flowers. To the south of the wasted well we planted a few mulberry and willow trees. They are now in bloom. The place looks better now. It was such a mess last year this time, right after the fire.¹⁴

After the fire Ruan Yuan went to live in the back of the family shrine on Wenxuan Lane, where his studio, the Wenxuanlou, was located.¹⁵ The shrine was actually a compound, comprising a number of buildings separated by courtyards, in the traditional Chinese design of courtyard houses. In addition to the central building which faced north and south, the Ruan home had buildings to the east and west as well. All the side buildings were two-storied.

The main entrance to the Family Shrine, built of brick with its own courtyard, was on the south. The courtyard was paved with green sandstone in the centre, about 150 square metres in size.¹⁶ In the rest of the yard on both sides, unpaved, Ruan Yuan planted four ginkgo (*baiguo* 白果) trees. Up three steps there was a triple door, painted crimson. A pair of stone lions stood on each side of the central door. Behind this structure was another yard, then another flight of steps.

12. Du Zhaotang, *O Yan Ji*, I, pp. 166–7.

13. 'On the third day of the third month, in the 23rd year of the Daoguang reign, my teacher's home burned down. All his books perished, including fifteen volumes of mine which he had borrowed.' Liu Wenqi (劉文淇), *Yizheng Liu Mengzhan Nianpu* (儀徵劉孟瞻年譜), p. 195.

14. *YJS*, Additional Supplement 6:9–10.

15. I visited Yangzhou in 1988 and was taken to see Ruan Yuan's old home by Mr Wang Yigong. While Wang was a child, he used to sit at the feet of Ruan Shenchuan (born after Ruan Yuan's death, so was not recorded in the *Diziji*), a great-grandson of Ruan Yuan. At that time Ruan Shenchuan 'was in his sixties. In the summer, as we caught the evening breeze sitting in the courtyard of the Family Shrine, he would talk about his famous ancestor and his time.' Also see manuscript for an article entitled 'Ruan Yuan's Old Home and Other Miscellaneous Information' written by Wang Yigong in November, 1988.

16. When I visited the site in 1988, the courtyard was not in good shape. It was being used as a deposit for broken pots and pans. The stone stele on which the eulogy by the Daoguang Emperor was engraved was lying on the ground, broken.

Up the steps was the chapel. Under Ruan Yuan's direction, it was furnished into a dignified resting place for the spiritual tablets of his grandparents, parents, and in time his own as well. From the rafters above the tablets hung the many red plaques with the imperial calligraphy the emperors had given to Ruan Yuan throughout the years. The buildings still exist, moreover in excellent condition, although its contents together with the former elegance are long gone.¹⁷

Back to the first courtyard and turning one's back on these crimson doors and looking at the wall surrounding the courtyard, one's eyes were led to the character *xi* (喜, joy or happiness) incised upon the wall. This character was to signify the phrase *kaimen jianxi* (開門見喜, every time the door is opened, you see good things!). The door no longer exists, but a solid brick wall remains. Ruan Yuan was a highly superstitious man. He wrote the characters *fushou rizeng* (福壽日增, every day the person who sees these characters will enjoy increased good fortune and long life) on a piece of red paper and pasted it on his bedroom door, in order to improve his luck.¹⁸ On the outside of the wall can still be seen the characters *Ruanshi Jiamiao* (阮氏家廟).

On each side of the shrine and courtyard stood two-storied edifices built of brick. These buildings, intended to be used as residences from the outset, were named the Eastern Study Hall (Dongshu 東塾) and the Western Study Hall (Xishu 西塾).¹⁹ They were so called because land on which educational institutions stood was exempt from land tax during the Qing.²⁰ The Western Study boasted a plaque, naming the buildings Studio for Learning Longevity (*Xueshou Zhai* 學壽齋). The calligraphy was by Liu Yong whose nephew, Liu Huanzhi, was a friend since their examination days. Ruan Yuan described the circumstances under which Liu Yong wrote the three-character scroll for him.

When I first went to Beijing (in 1786) I was under thirty *sui*, small in stature and very, very thin. When I was assigned to the Imperial Study (1790) I worked under Ji Wenda Gong (Ji Yun) (紀文達公), Liu Wenqing Gong (Liu Yong), and Peng Wenqing Gong (Peng Yuanrui). Peng Wenqing Gong pointed at Liu Wenqing Gong and told me that 'You must emulate him. The first thing you must learn is how to achieve longevity.' Right then and there, I pleaded with Liu Wenqing Gong to write for me the three characters: 'Learn, Longevity, Studio'.²¹

17. Letter from Wang Yigong; also personal visits in 1988 and 1994. I was not able to see the shrine itself because it was the home of the party cadre at that time.

18. Letter from Wang Yigong.

19. See Chapter 10.

20. Tax based on land (*di* 地) and head (*ding* 丁) was first promulgated in 1646 listing the total amount of cultivated land in the empire and the quota each province had to bear. Exempt from this land tax were official and public lands assigned to sacrificial and educational purposes.

21. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 3:14a–b.

Behind the shrine there was another courtyard. In the back of the courtyard facing the shrine stood Ruan Yuan's own apartments, with his study, the Wenxuanlou on the top floor. Kong Luhua wrote this description when the buildings were first erected:

The yard was not large. I cannot glorify it by referring to it as a garden. Its crisscross measurement is about five by six *zhang*.²² It is surrounded by a low wall. There are a few stones here and there, although they cannot be called rockeries. We have planted a couple of plane trees (*wutong* 梧桐)²³ for shade. (Depending on the season), we have vines, cherries or plums, and orchids. We also have quince in the winter. My regret is the absence of a pond, so there is never any lotus flower in our yard.²⁴

There was one pride and joy for Ruan Yuan and his family in the yard, however. It was a gorgeous peony bush, its beauty reflected from a poem entitled 'Ode to the Peony' by Kong Luhua:

At the front of the Wenxuan Pavilion, three hundred peony blossoms wave, Resulting in an aura of crimson.²⁵

On the side of these residential buildings and the shrine there were lanes of about three metres wide, originally designed to allow carriages and sedan chairs to park when Ruan Yuan and his descendants visited the shrine. There was also a well for family use. It was important to have a well as a source of water for the household. It was equally important for the well to be located outside the garden wall, at a distance from where household waste was emptied, in order to avoid pollution.²⁶

Ruan Yuan bought two pieces of property in the countryside with cottages on them during the Jiaqing reign. One was the site of the cottage in the vicinity of the Ruan graves at Leitang (Leitang Mulu 雷塘墓廬). The other piece of property was located just to the right of the Ruan Clan Temple. This was called Ruan Gong Pavilion (阮公樓).²⁷ Ruan Yuan visited these properties as often as

22. 1 *zhang* = approximately 140 feet.

23. *Wutong* (梧桐, *sterculia platunifolia*) is a common specie of trees in China. It grows very fast, and gives ample shade. According to folklore, it is also the only tree in which a phoenix (*feng* 鳳) would rest. See Matthew's *Chinese-English Dictionary* (1943 edition), p. 7191.

24. Kong, *Draft Poems* 3:13a–b.

25. *Draft Poems* 3:13b.

26. I am grateful to my father for this explanation.

27. *Beihu Xiaozhi* (北湖續志), compiled by Ruan Xian (阮先), in *Yangzhou Cong Ke* (揚州叢刻), Supplement 3:10a–b.

he could, for, in addition to enjoying the countryside, the retired official and aged scholar sought to visualize himself as a link between his living descendants and his ancestors. The cottages also provided dwellings for distant relatives of the Ruan clan. Here Ruan Yuan was fulfilling his responsibilities as a descendant in the Confucian tradition.

Ruan Yuan enjoyed spending time in the country. Perhaps it gave him the chance to be away from a noisy household full of squabbling women and young children. He wrote, however, that as he contemplated his mortality, he wanted to be close to his ancestors.²⁸

My ancestors first settled near the Gongdao Bridge, to escape the disturbances of that time.

Today, their graves are in the fields west of this bridge, where spruce and pine trees stand.

When their descendants walk on this bridge,
Generations of their progenitors are in view.

The islets in the Yangzi and Coral Cottage (Zhuhu Cao Tang 珊瑚草堂), former country home of his grandfather near Gongdao Bridge in the north of Yangzhou, were marginal land by today's standards and by Ruan Yuan's time had become swamp land under flood water much of the time.²⁹ Later, Ruan Yuan reclaimed the land by planting a large number of willow trees, as a result changing the name of the site to Hall of the Ten Thousand Willows (Wanliu Tang 萬柳堂), after a classical painting he saw in the imperial collection. The property comprised 500 *mou* of land, roughly 330 hectares. West of the Hall there was a small cottage. 'I like this thatched cottage. It is dry and clean, located immediately to the west of the Hall of the Ten Thousand Willows and the Slender West Lake. It cost just a few thousand strings of cash for me to refurbish it.'³⁰ He used this cottage as a country retreat after his retirement in 1838, and lived there during the Opium War, when the British forces were on the Yangzi. Liang Zhangju visited him there, reporting that it was an unpretentious dwelling, but quiet and restful.

Financial Worries

Ruan Yuan was not lonely. Although by this time only Liu Wenru of his spouses was still living, and his sons were serving elsewhere, he had grandchildren and great grandchildren around him. There were twenty grandchildren who lived to

28. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 5:16.

29. *Yangzhou Cong Ke*, Supplement 3:10a–b., see also Liang Zhangju, *Langji Congtan* I:19.

30. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 2:31–2.

adulthood by his four sons, and twenty-one great grandchildren whose births were recorded in the *Diziji*. The last of these births was in 1841. Not counting his own wife and concubines, in the household there were the sons, grandchildren and great grandchildren. In addition, there were the wives and concubines of the sons and grandsons, and then there were the household servants, too, making more than one hundred mouths to feed.³¹

His greatest worry at that time appeared to be finding sufficient cash to meet his needs. A number of brief missives he wrote to various members of his family are extant.³² The letters reveal his state of mind. None of the letters was dated, but it was possible from the events mentioned to conjecture the dates of some of them. Several of the letters were addressed to his cousin Ruan Heng, who died in 1856, seven years after Ruan Yuan's own.³³ We know that Ruan Heng spent his entire life on the staff of his cousin, so most likely he handled Ruan Yuan's personal affairs, including household management.³⁴ The chief of Ruan Yuan's household servants was a man referred in these memoranda as Yuan San (袁三). In one of the letters, Ruan Yuan apologized to Ruan Heng for napping while the cousin was handling payment of certain accounts with Yuan San.

I am so sorry that I was so rude by sleeping while you and Yuan San handled the accounts. These accounts should have been settled a long time ago, but somehow I had not been able to get around to taking care of (the payment).³⁵

Without overtaxing our imagination, it is possible to see how relieved Ruan Heng and Yuan San must have been to be able to complete some household chores and pay some bills without Ruan Yuan fussing about them.

Household expenses were high.³⁶ Accounts for such standard items, rice, oil, and salt, for instance, were settled periodically, several times a year before a major festival, such as the Dragon Boat Festival in the fifth month, the Mid-

31. This number was hinted at in one of the notes Ruan Yuan wrote to his sons after his retirement, no date.

32. The original manuscript has been bound into two volumes, given the title *Ruan Wenda Gong Zhi Shihou Jiashu* (阮文達公致仕後家書) [Ruan Yuan's letters to members of his family after retirement] and is now in the National Library in Beijing. See Appendix V.

33. (*Xuzuan*) *Yangzhou Fuzhi* (續纂揚州府志) (1887), 13:21b–22.

34. Ruan Heng received an allowance, for, in one of the notes, ranting his frustrations on what bills had to be paid, Ruan Yuan wrote 'of course your allowance must be respected'.

35. *Jiashu*, no pagination.

36. In one of the letters in *jiashu*, no pagination, Ruan Yuan mentioned the amount 'two thousand' but did not specify the unit of currency he meant. Two thousand copper cash would be too low. It is more likely two thousand strings of copper cash, which, at that time, would be the equivalent of more or less two thousand taels of silver.

Autumn Festival in the eighth, and the Spring Festival at the start of the lunar year. Ruan Yuan was counting on receipts from the sale of the dried reed, which was due the day before.

There are too many creditors, and I am still waiting for the payment from the sale of the dried reed. Ordinarily, we should receive payments from the dried reed sale twice a month, on the sixteenth and at the end of the month. We did not receive anything yesterday. We are waiting (for the money). It is not that we are waiting for this money to buy food, but there are other urgent matters needing our attention.³⁷

As can be discerned from this message, Ruan Yuan's anxiety over money was acute. He was waiting for cash to pay recurrent household expenses, to feed more than one hundred individuals, and to take care of other urgent matters. The urgent matter referred to in this letter was the funeral expenses of the wife of a nephew, whose death was expected momentarily. In reality, this woman should not have been a part of his responsibilities. It does show, however, that regardless, Ruan Yuan, as a successful man within the Confucian tradition, it was deemed his responsibility to take care of all the needs of individuals related to him, no matter how remote, especially in matters related to birthdays (*shou* 壽), weddings (*xi* 喜), or funerals (*sang* 喪). 'We have not a penny in the till,'³⁸ lamented Ruan Yuan, but went on to declare: 'Let us not worry about the household expenses at this time, just send five hundred ...'³⁹

Ruan Yuan had four sons, including Ruan Changsheng who died in 1833. Two of the sons, Ruan Hu and Ruan Fu, were serving as officials but not being high-ranking officials in wealthy provinces, were not earning the kind of money their father was. Furthermore, their offices were gained through the *juanna* system, and apparently the amount to secure the office was not an once-for-all-time payment. The *juanna* contribution had to be paid on a regular basis while the man was holding office. 'Yesterday there was a letter from the capital. Hu's contribution is due. Payment must be made — one thousand taels in the sixth month and six hundred taels in the seventh.'⁴⁰

One way for short-term financing in traditional China was through the pawn shops. Ruan Yuan quoted a poem he remembered when the poet made use of this method to cover his shortfall.

37. *Jiashu*. Speaking on hardships faced by local fuel producers, Ruan Yuan wrote that the local reed came from marshlands along the Yangzi. There was increasing competition from dried reed from the seashore, which, Ruan Yuan recognized, were more efficient.

38. *Jiashu*.

39. *Jiashu*.

40. *Jiashu*, this letter was dated the 18th, with no month or year specified.

When the west wind blows and the temperature drops,
 Unlike padded silk garments, cotton clothes can no longer keep me warm.
 As we get around to redeem winter clothes from the pawn shops,
 Other people are already clad in furs.⁴¹

‘I understand exactly what this man is talking about,’ wrote Ruan Yuan to his family. ‘When you have time, redeem the two cases of winter garments we have in the pawn shop.’⁴² Sending one’s winter clothes to the pawn shops for the duration of hot weather helped solve another problem. There was no need for storage. The spring and summer months in Yangzhou, with insects and mildew, would have created havoc with the care of woollen and fur-lined garments. In one of her poems admonishing the children, Kong Luhua wrote that ‘your father has spent his entire life serving the country, his pockets are not full. The only wealth he amassed is in his book collection. I hope that you will emulate him.’⁴³ So short-term financing using the pawnshops was routine for Ruan Yuan.

Old Friends

The presence of British troops in other parts of the country brought old friends to Yangzhou in 1841. Liang Zhangju, seventy-five *sui*, Qian Meixi (錢梅溪), eighty-four, Zhu Jian (朱琿), seventy-five, Wang Ziqing (王子卿), eighty-four, and Ruan Yuan seventy-five, formed an informal ‘Society of Five Old Men’ (Wulao hui 五老會) at that time.⁴⁴ They gathered at Wenxuan Pavilion, or at the Hall of the Ten Thousand Willows. They painted, wrote poems, and laughed at Ruan Yuan’s incapacity to drink more than one small cup of wine. They visited the residence where Liang was a guest, a famous garden which belonged to a salt merchant who was no longer in Yangzhou. Liang wrote,

When Ruan Yuntai came to see me ... , he told me that this garden, called The Rong Garden (Rong Yuan 容園), was considered to be the premier garden in Yangzhou. ‘When I was a young child I was too poor to be allowed to enter Now that I am finally here, I can feast my eyes.’ At that time, I had not yet visited Ruan Yuan at his home, so I asked how his own garden compared with this one. He laughed, ‘I do not have the money to buy such a garden. Even if I could afford it, I would not have bought a garden. Here in Yangzhou, the gardens are named after their owners. Mr Zhang’s garden is called Zhang Yuan (張園), Mr Li’s Li Yuan (李園). Any garden of mine would have been called “Ruan Yuan”.’⁴⁵

41. For poem reproduced in *Jiashu*, see reproduction in his book.

42. *Jiashu*, same letter as poem.

43. *Draft Poems* 6:18b.

44. Liang, *Guitian Suoji* 1:2b–3.

This was a play on words. ‘Ruan Yuan’ (園) not only sounded like his name Ruan Yuan (元). In the Yangzhou dialect the word ‘ruan’ is pronounced ‘luan’, a homonym for ‘disturbance’ (*luan* 亂). Ruan Yuan was joking about his garden being known as ‘The Garden of Disturbance’ (亂園).

This type of bantering continued, reflecting Ruan Yuan’s lifelong fascination with words. Liang sent two heads of shad to Ruan Yuan one day, and received a note asking if he knew what the word ‘shad’ had originated in the classic *Erya*. The result was an elegant essay on the origin, development, and transformation in orthography of the character ‘shad’ — from *hu* (鮪) to *yin* (鮓) to *shi* (鮓).⁴⁶ In reality, these were different species of fish, but biological exactitude was not troubling the old friends whiling away their leisurely hours.

Other old friends came to call. Zhang Tingji (張廷濟) who had been at Gujing Jingshe in Hangzhou forty or so years before, visited in 1843. ‘More than forty years have elapsed since we saw each other,’ Ruan Yuan was to recall. It was not surprising that he hardly recognized his seventy-five-year-old visitor. Ruan Yuan himself was seventy-nine at that time. ‘In the *Classic of Poetry*, and the *Classic of Rite*, there were frequent references to longevity eyebrows (*shoumei* 壽眉). Seeing my friend and his luxurious long white eyebrows, I know what this term means, at last.’⁴⁷

Continued Imperial Favour and Honour

Meanwhile, there were enjoyable and exciting moments. The emperor had not forgotten Ruan Yuan. On the second day of the Chinese New Year (15 February 1839), the Daoguang Emperor at the capital was distributing to the princes and

45. Liang, *Guitian Suoji* 1:2a–b.

46. Liang, *Guitian Suoji* 1:7b–8. This gift of shad took on special significance because the fish was one of the rare delicacies which were offered to the emperor as a tribute at one time. As this species was produced only in Jiangnan, a distance of almost one thousand miles from Beijing, and as the fish died immediately upon leaving water of a certain temperature, the transportation of this precious tribute article became a challenging task for all officials along the route. From Jiangsu to Beijing tanks with water of the exact temperature specified were set up about two miles apart along the route. Messengers waited day and night during the shad season for the arrival of the tribute. There was supposed to have been a memorial (memorialist unknown) to the Kangxi Emperor (dated Kangxi 22/3/2 [1683/3/29]) asking the emperor to stop accepting this type of tribute as a ‘compassionate gesture’ to officials and people along the route, but nobody I consulted has been able to confirm that he or she has actually seen such a document.

47. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 3:16b–17. *Shoumei* refers to white and luxuriate eyebrows. For Zhang’s earlier connection with Ruan Yuan, see Zhang Yin (張崑), ‘Gujing Jingshe Zhi Chugao’ (詒經精社志初稿) (1936), p. 1.

high officials meat from the animal he had used in the sacrifices the day before. He remembered Ruan Yuan. ‘Ruan Yuan had always had a share of this meat. Now that he is retired and away from the capital, let us send his share to him.’⁴⁸ Thereupon the meat was delivered by officials of the Imperial Household Department to the residence of Ruan Hu who was in Beijing at that time. Ruan Hu took immediate steps to preserve the meat by packing it in salt, and sending it non-stop by horse down to Yangzhou. Horses by road travelled faster than boat by canal. Since the element of comfort was not a consideration but the quality of the meat was, it was decided to opt for the faster method in transporting the meat to Ruan Yuan. Eighteen days later the meat arrived at its destination, only to find Ruan Yuan out of town at the clan temple. He was informed, rushed home, lit incense and knelt to *kowtow*, facing north, the direction of the emperor, wrote a thank-you memorial while the meat was desalted and prepared. Then he divided it among members of his family, all of whom partook their portions on their knees.⁴⁹

Ruan Yuan’s ‘thank-you’ memorial to the emperor was sent post-haste to Beijing. The memorial was delivered to the Office of the Provincial Memorials staffed by the personnel of the Imperial Household Department. ‘My legs are bad. For the smallest movement I need the support of two people. Otherwise I would be rushing to the capital to thank you in person.’⁵⁰

Imperial Gifts for Eightieth *Sui* Birthday

For Ruan Yuan’s eightieth *sui* celebrations in 1843 the City of Yangzhou turned out to watch the arrival of the emperor’s gifts. The emperor had summoned Ruan Yuan’s sons to the imperial palace to receive gifts on their father’s behalf. The sons hired a barge, and selected a propitious date to transport the imperial gifts to Yangzhou by the Grand Canal. The gifts by themselves were already impressive.⁵¹

3 plaques bearing calligraphy of the emperor:

‘Nourish the spirit and extend the years’ (*yixing yanling* 頤性延齡)⁵²

‘Good Fortune’ (*fu* 福)

‘Longevity’ (*shou* 壽)

48. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 4:2b–3.

49. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 4:2b–3.

50. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 4:5.

51. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 4:5b. See also *Diziji* 8.

52. From this day forward, Ruan Yuan added ‘Old Man with Nourished Spirit’ (*yixing laoren* 頤性老人) to his string of *hao*. The noted Qing historian, Professor Fang Hao (方豪 1910–81), gave me a pair of scrolls with calligraphy by Ruan Yuan. It was signed ‘Old Man with Nourished Spirit, Ruan Yuan’, aged eighty-four (1847).

- 1 pair scrolls each with a seven-character congratulatory calligraphy
- 1 portrait of Buddha (*foxiang* 佛像)
- 1 white jade court sceptre (*ruyi* 如意)
- 1 strand crystal court beads (*chaozhu* 朝珠)
- 1 robe embroidered with dragons (*mangpao* 蟒袍)
- 2 satin robes (*daduan pao* 大緞袍)
- 8 silk robes (*jiangchou pao* 江綢袍)

It was the ceremonies attending the gifts' arrival in Yangzhou that 'emptied the city streets'.⁵³ The barge carried the gifts to the docks outside the city wall, where Ruan Yuan repaired to receive them. The procession, led by almost one hundred pairs of lictor bearers, each carrying a title or office Ruan Yuan held (*xianpai* 銜牌) during his fifty years in public service, from Hanlin Bachelor to Grand Tutor, his most prominent title. The actual offices he held were carved in gilt on red boards. When the title was an honorary one bestowed by the emperor, the words were red, carved on yellow board. In addition to these lictor bearers, there were carriers of fans, banners and lanterns. The total procession was 'more than one *li* in length'.⁵⁴ It was truly an honour that had not been 'extended to anyone from Yangzhou in the entire two hundred years of the Qing dynasty'.⁵⁵

The imperial gifts, escorted by Ruan Yuan's sons Ruan Fu and Ruan Hu, arrived at Yangzhou after a twenty-two-day journey from Beijing. Ruan Yuan met them at the bank of the Grand Canal. A table was set with yellow candles and yellow incense, symbolizing imperial presence. After Ruan Yuan performed the ceremony of the grand *kowtow*, three kneelings and nine prostrations, undoubtedly with the entire populace of Yangzhou on their knees, he boarded the barge to receive the presents one by one. As he took each item he put it reverently on an individual receptacle, all placed on a table draped with yellow cloth, under a yellow umbrella. Then, Ruan Yuan again thanked the emperor by performing three kneelings and the nine prostrations. The presents, with their covering umbrellas, now joined the procession to return to Ruan Yuan's residence on Grand Tutor Street, marching through the city street by street, needless to say followed by all of its inhabitants. The entire process of transferring each gift one by one was repeated from the street into the house. Then, there was rejoicing with a wonderful feast for 'civil and military officials, local gentry, students and old friends'.⁵⁶ This was an unusual celebration for Ruan Yuan's birthday indeed.

53. *Oyanji* I: 166–7.

54. *Oyanji* I: 166–7.

55. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 4:6.

56. *Oyanji* I: 166–7. Ruan Xixiang and Wang Yigong both confirmed the existence of the plaques, which still hung at the gate of Ruan Yuan's old home as late as 1949.

Normally, he spent his birthdays ‘brewing tea’ somewhere with his family, never receiving well-wishers.

The British Forces and the Taiping Rebels Remembered Ruan Yuan

Liang Zhangju wrote that it was due to Ruan Yuan’s presence that the British forces invading the Yangzi spared Yangzhou from being devastated. Liang quoted a poem, written by a Peng Chunong (彭春農) comparing the saving of Yangzhou from the British soldiers to a similar incidence of the Han era. The forces of the Yellow Turbans at that time did not destroy the City of Gaomi (高密) because of their respect for one of its residents, Zheng Kangcheng (鄭康成).⁵⁷ Peng was trying to flatter Ruan Yuan, of course. Historical records do not give credence to this claim. Instead, it is more likely that the British spared Yangzhou because the city had paid half a million dollars to be spared invasion and raiding.⁵⁸

Another tradition flatteringly attested to Ruan Yuan’s integrity, rather, how the populace respected him for his kindness and his integrity. When the Taiping forces entered Yangzhou in the 1850s, the soldiers, who were mostly Cantonese, saw the inscription on the outer wall of the Ruan Family Shrine. They asked whether it was the same Ruan who was Governor-General at Canton earlier. After receiving a positive reply, the soldiers left the Ruan compound intact because they remembered Ruan Yuan as a fair and honest Governor-General at Canton.

The Remaining Years

For six more years, Ruan Yuan the octogenarian spent his time enjoying his family. He was busy arranging marriages for his grandchildren and anticipating births of great grandchildren. Two of his sons were already pursuing official careers. Only Ruan Konghou remained at home. Occasionally, Ruan Yuan still visited various sites around Yangzhou, but his major pastime remained practising calligraphy. In 1846 he again was honoured by the emperor by being awarded the honorary title Grand Mentor (*taifu* 太傅) and having his stipend raised to full pay. It was at this time the street on which he lived was renamed Grand Mentor Street (Taifu Jie) in recognition of this honour. At the gate of the Ruan residence were erected these plaques, in couplets:

Grand Secretary for Three Reigns (*Sanchao neige* 三朝內閣)
Official in Nine Provinces (*Jiusheng fengjiang* 九省封疆)

57. Liang Zhangju, *Guitian Suoji* 2 (Taipei edition), p. 38.

58. See Betty Peh-ti Wei, *Shanghai: Crucible of Modern China* (1987), pp. 26–7.

Apparently Ruan Yuan was surprised to be given this singular honour. He asked his friend Liang Zhangju to check to see how many officials had received this title during the current dynasty. Liang found that 'only six individuals, including Chinese and Manchus, had received this title during their life time. Otherwise, counting all those who received the title posthumously, no more than a dozen or so officials were so honoured.'⁵⁹ Furthermore, Ruan Yuan's previous rank was Grand Tutor, a lofty title by itself already, but still several steps below that of the Grand Mentor in terms of ceremonial precedence.

That year, Ruan Yuan attended, for the third time in his life, the Banquet of the Bleating Deer (*Luming Yan* 鹿鳴宴) celebrating the successes of provincial graduates. It was the sixtieth anniversary of his becoming a provincial graduate. Apparently he had to be prepared to write again as well. This time, instead of having to make the black ink on a stone with an ink stick, he carried with him ready-made ink. This was the ink box (*moshuijia* 墨水匣 or *mohe* 墨盒), predecessor to today's ink pad, a covered container with a tight lid made of silver, with silk filature inside, soaked in black ink. The brush was dipped onto the filature, and Ruan Yuan was able to write. There were many advantages. It was ready, and it would not leak. In fact, Ruan Yuan was credited for inventing this useful implement.⁶⁰

His health continued to deteriorate. His eyesight was failing. However, he continued to communicate with the emperor:

I have not seen snow in Yangzhou for over thirty years. Today, I climbed upstairs to the Wenxuan lou Studio to look at the streets after four days of snow. My eyes are astigmatic. Somehow, instead of the snow, I thought I was seeing thousands of houses instead.⁶¹

He knew that death was at hand. As 1849 approached its end, Ruan Yuan informed the emperor in a memorial intended for submission after his death, that 'since the onset of winter I have become much weaker. Medicine has not been effective.'⁶² He went on to voice his concerns for the country. These concerns included border and internal security, grain and treasury reserves, flood control, water conservancy and general welfare of the people.⁶³ He left

59. Liang Zhangju, *Langji Xutan* (浪跡續談) (Taipei 1974 edition), pp. 365–6.

60. *Gudong Xuoji* (骨董瑣記) [Incidental notes on antiques], compiled by Deng Zhicheng (鄧志誠). I am grateful to Professor Kong Decheng who found this information while browsing at the Fu Ssu-nian Library at the Institute of History and Philology, Academic Sinica. See also *Shuntian Fuzhi* (順天府志), compiled by Zhou Jiamei (周家楣) and Miao Quansun (繆荃孫) (1886), *juan* 130.

61. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 5:15.

62. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 8:22.

63. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 8:22.

the future of his surviving sons and one grandson Enlai (恩來), who had passed the provincial examination, to the care of the emperor.

On 20 November 1849, he went to visit the clan temple at Gongdao Bridge for the final time. A few days later, on 27 November 1849, Ruan Yuan died.

He was buried at Leitang, in the same tomb as his second wife, Kong Luhua.⁶⁴ He was dressed in full court regalia of a first rank official, including a strand of court beads and a red button on the top of his hat. No precious objects or anything else was put in the tomb.⁶⁵

Ruan Yuan's Income and the Issue of Integrity

Ruan Yuan has been considered an honest official (*qingguan* 清官) by contemporary standards. He was also cleared by British sources against the generally blanket charges that all Chinese officials in Canton were involved in the illegal opium trade. C. Majoribanks, a director of the East India Company, testified before a Parliamentary committee investigating the opium trade that, during the period Ruan Yuan was at Canton, 1817–26, 'the highest officials at Canton were not involved in the smuggling activities'.⁶⁶ A Chinese official's being 'involved in the smuggling activities' meant that he was accepting bribes from the British or Chinese smugglers, or was in league with them.

Chinese sources also attested to Ruan Yuan's integrity. On his father's seventieth birthday in 1804, Ruan Yuan could have made use of the occasion to extract valuable gifts. Yet, the only gifts he would accept for his father were congratulatory essays and poems, otherwise 'not one length of silk, or one stick of candle'.⁶⁷ Ruan Yuan's own birthdays were usually spent away from his official residence, quietly with his family, in order to avoid having people coming to bring him greetings and presents. In 1849, the year Ruan Yuan died, his son Ruan Fu was appointed to be a magistrate in Gansu. Together with other officials, he attended an audience with the Daoguang Emperor. The emperor summoned him again a few days later, and said,

64. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 8:22.

65. When the tomb was opened in 1982, Ruan Yuan's remains had disintegrated completely. The beads and button, on the other hand, were preserved intact. They are now in the Jiangsu Museum of History in Nanjing.

66. 'Report from Committees on China Trade: East India Company', *Parliamentary Papers*, 22 August 1840, VII, Section 713.

67. *Diziji* 2:13b.

The other day when you were here I knew you were Ruan Yuan's son. How old is he now? I remember that you had worked under your father, so you must already know that Gansu is an important border province. Being a magistrate is an important job. The most important thing to remember is integrity. Learn from the example your father has set as an official with high standards. How are your father's legs? Is it true that he really cannot even take one single step? If it were not for his problems with his leg, I would never have allowed him to retire.⁶⁸

Ruan Yuan sent a memorial shortly thereafter to thank the emperor for such kind words to his son. This prompted another imperial message to Ruan Fu.

As you are Ruan Yuan's son, you should understand the meaning of integrity. The governor-general of your province has reported that you are doing a fine job. Remember, you are the son of a high official. Even if you do not assume high airs, people will say that you are snobbish. Your father was an honest official. By behaving like him, you cannot go wrong.⁶⁹

Yet, Ruan Yuan had to have accumulated sufficient income to purchase the various pieces of property in Yangzhou, to support a large retinue of scholars and to undertake the publication of many literary projects — all of these expenses were in addition to his familial obligations as head of household and member of the Ruan clan. His main source of income was his government pay. It is clear that here is a case that bears out Chang Chung-li's observation of 'the general view that in traditional Chinese society, government service offered the most lucrative career'.⁷⁰

Chang's research into the income of the Chinese gentry from official careers shows that provincial officials received extremely handsome incomes. Income of an individual official from office was divided into four categories: salary, administrative expenses (*gongfei* 公費), *yanglian*, and 'extra income'. The amount of the first two categories might be negligible, but the *yanglian* for the provincial offices held by Ruan Yuan was estimated to be from 10,000 to 20,000 taels a year, and that as Grand Secretary even more. 'Extra income' for provincial governors and governors-general was found by Chang to be 'very high'.⁷¹

This category, defined by Chang as an official's 'income which was not fixed (by law) but had become regularized through practice and custom',⁷² for the

68. *Diziji* 8:20.

69. *Diziji* 8:21.

70. Chang Chung-li, *Income of the Chinese Gentry* (1961), p. 42.

71. Chang, *Income*, p. 34.

72. Chang, *Income*, p. 34.

provincial governors and governors-general was calculated to be 180,000 taels a year.⁷³ It must be understood that this is merely a ballpark figure. In the provinces where Ruan Yuan served, Zhejiang, Jiangxi and Guangdong, where trade and commerce flourished, and in Yunnan, where there was mining of salt and copper as well as trade and commerce, the ‘extra income’ could be considerable. As cash compensation, however, the amount of actual *yanglian* would be adjusted accordingly.

The bulk, if not all, of Ruan Yuan’s income was from these sources. In calculating his income throughout his more than forty years in government service, beginning in 1793 when he became provincial Director of Studies in Shandong carrying the second rank as vice-president of various boards, the years 1809–12 when he held inconsequential posts (as far as income was concerned) have been excluded. Estimated income for Ruan Yuan from 1793 to 1835 came to a total of 6,035,568.5 taels. This figure was arrived at by multiplying the number for years and months Ruan Yuan served in each office and income from the four categories given by Chang Chung-li in his chapter entitled ‘Office as a Source of Income’.⁷⁴ All amounts given here are in taels.

With this calibre of income, it should become clearer how Ruan Yuan was able to buy land in Yangzhou and its environs, fulfil his obligations as son and descendant, and support scholars and literary projects everywhere he went. It has been established already that the house converted into the Queen of Heaven shrine had been paid for by his wife from proceeds of the sale of her jewellery. His income as governor of Zhejiang, at 190,250 taels annually, should have been more than enough for him to indulge in his interest in bronze collection, and to buy the site for house, studio, and family shrine on Wenxuan Lane. With the silting of the Grand Canal by the beginning of the nineteenth century and the decline of the Huai area salt trade, Yangzhou was losing its importance as a port and commercial centre. Property values, accordingly, were at least stable. Statistics on property transactions are extremely rare. One source gives the amount received from his sale of five *mou* of land in 1866 as 150,000 copper cash.⁷⁵ Even without taking into consideration inflation and other factors, at the official rate of one thousand copper cash to one tael of silver it was doubtful that Ruan Yuan paid more than thirty taels for each *mou* of land he purchased. The fields south of the Ruan graves in Gongdao Bridge were already in the clan’s possession since before

73. Chang, *Income*, p. 40.

74. Chang, *Income*, pp. 7–42.

75. Zhang Dechang (張德昌), *Qingji Yige Jingguan de Shenghuo* (清季一個京官的生活) (1970), p. 73.

Table 13.1 Estimated total income for Ruan Yuan from official sources, 1793–1835, in taels (excluding October 1809 to September 1812)

Date	Length in Office		Office (Rank)	Estimated Income	
	No. of Years & Months			Annual	Total
1793–5	2	10	Director of Studies (Shandong) ⁷⁶	1,650.00	4,950.00
1795–8	3	0	Director of Studies (Zhejiang)	1,650.00	4,950.00
1795–1799	4	0	Various (2A/B)	30,256.50	121,026.00
1799–1805	5	9	Governor Zhejiang (2B)	190,250.00	1,093,937.00
1808–1809	1	6	Governor Zhejiang (2B)	190,250.00	285,375.00
1812–1814	1	8	Director-General, Grain Transport (2B)	150,250.00	262,937.00
1814–1816	2	3	Governor Jiangxi (2B)	190,250.00	428,062.00
1816	0	6	Governor Henan (2B)	195,250.00	97,625.00
1816–1817	0	8	Governor-General Huguang (2A)	195,250.00	130,173.00
1817–1826	8	9	Governor-General LiangGuang (2A)	195,250.00	1,708,437.00
1826–1833	6	3	Governor-General YunGui (2A)	200,250.00	1,251,562.00
1833–1835	2	6	Governor-General (1B) Grand Secretary (1A)	200,280.00	500,700.00
1835–8	2	9	Grand Secretary (1A)	52,807.80	145,221.50
1793–1838	Total			6,035,568.50	

Ruan Yan's time, and as Ruan Yuan gained a voice in managing clan affairs because of his political position and social status, he did not have to pay high prices for the acquisition of the fields.⁷⁷

Out of his income from office Ruan Yuan had to take care of the salaries of his staff. The secretaries (*muyou* 幕友) 'were administrative experts employed by local officials'.⁷⁸ Tung-tsu Ch'ü, in his study of local administration during the Qing, *Local Government in China Under the Ch'ing*, gives the annual salary of a

76. The appointment was generally for three years, meaning that he stayed in the province for three years' examinations, not necessarily three calendar years. Hence, in calculating the salary, I used the annual term rather than the exact number of months Ruan Yuan was on duty in the provinces.

77. Ruan Yuan wrote that he spent 'a few thousand' to buy five hundred *mou* of land in Gongdao Bridge to build the Hall of the Ten Thousand Willows. *YJSJ*, Additional Supplement 2:31–32.

78. Tung-tsu Ch'ü, *Local Government in China under the Ch'ing* (1962), p. 93.

secretary on the district level in Guangdong in 1800 as 1,500–1,800 taels.⁷⁹ Conceivably, a secretary to the governor-general in the same province would command a higher salary, but Chang Chung-li's estimate for such a secretary's annual salary was between 1,000 and 1,500 taels.⁸⁰ Whereas Ruan Yuan's staff might not all be so highly compensated, it was logical that a large portion of Ruan Yuan's income was spent on staff salaries.

Another large portion of his income went to support his activities as a patron of scholarship and learning. The cost of establishing academies such as the Gujing Jingshe in Hangzhou and the Xuehaitang in Canton was borne by contributions. No record for financing the Gujing Jingshe was available to this research, but the Xuehaitang was known to have been financed by contributions.⁸¹ Fields were purchased with money from the *yanglian* funds of the province and income from these fields. This sum, amounting to about one thousand taels annually, was used to pay expenses for the academy. In addition, other programmes for financing were adopted. Ruan Yuan himself gave four thousand taels to the academy at the time of its founding to be used as capital funds, and encouraged others to follow his example. By lending the money to the merchants at a monthly interest rate of one percent, Ruan Yuan hoped to earn enough to pay the expenses of the academy.⁸²

A large retinue of scholars followed Ruan Yuan. Some of them worked on major projects such as the *Major Works on the Classics by Qing Dynasty Scholars* and *The Comprehensive Gazetteer of Guangdong*. Therefore, they were financed through the funding of these works. Others, like Ruan Heng and Jiao Xun, served on Ruan Yuan's personal secretarial staff. These private secretaries without special expertise were not highly paid. A master lecturer at Xuehaitang was recorded to draw a salary of thirty-six taels a year.⁸³ Assuming that Ruan Yuan paid these general secretaries no less than this amount, he had to be giving them at least board and room as well. Therefore, he did not amass a large fortune despite his handsome income as a provincial governor and governor-general. This was at least in part what the Daoguang Emperor had meant when he said that Ruan Yuan was one official who had unswerving integrity, 'resolute and trustworthy'.⁸⁴

79. Ch'ü, *Local Government*, p. 112.

80. Chang, *Income*, p. 85.

81. *Xuehaitang Zhi* 13a–b. See also Zhang Yin (張崑), 'Gujing Jingshe Zhi Chugao' (詒經精社志初稿) (1936), but it contains very little information on financing.

82. *Xuehaitang Zhi* 14a–b. Apparently this type of funding was not completely reliable as merchants often failed to pay the interests they had contracted at the time of the loan.

83. *Xuehaitang Zhi* 15.

84. *Diziji* 8:21b.

Concluding Comments

Ruan Yuan enjoyed eleven years of retirement life among family and friends. He was never without physical discomfort and pain, and was under constant financial pressure, but it cannot be denied that these were his golden years. From a childhood of genteel poverty to be the most venerated individual in town, with a glorious government career and splendid scholarly achievements behind him, Ruan Yuan was also blessed with a happy family life. The immediate cause of his death was not known, but to have lived for eighty-six years before the advent of modern medicine, without great loss of mental capacity, it was a good life.

Conclusions

This project, which has taken me more than a score of years to complete, has been worthwhile. Ruan Yuan's accomplishments were legion, and some of his work has remained relevant today, two hundred years after his time. At any rate, scholars and students in many areas of endeavour are still benefiting from knowledge enhanced by Ruan Yuan. In addition to philosophy and literature, his research topics embraced bronze inscriptions and stone steles, historical geography, Sino-British relations, minority cultures, construction of seaworthy junks, shrines and temples, dredging of waterways, measurement of grain storage in warehouses and on ships, location of planets, mathematicians, astronomers, and even species of mushrooms and fish. For me, research has been intense and extensive, and writing challenging. I am happy that I made the decision to undertake this biographical study. I am also happy that the task has not become stale despite its long duration.

I have regrets, however. Certain important information is missing, especially financial records. I have managed to estimate Ruan Yuan's earnings from official sources, and these figures are fairly accurate, I believe. I know the origins of some of his income from non-official sources, such as the sale of reeds for fuel, but not the amount. He also operated a 'publishing house', the Wenxuan Lou Printers, but I have no knowledge as to whether it was a profitable concern, or depended on his subsidy. There is no record of expenditure. If indeed any of his accounts is extant at all, I have not been able to find even a single clue of its whereabouts. Therefore, except for the fact that he had accumulated property and maintained a more than comfortable style of living, notwithstanding supporting a household of more than one hundred persons, he was never totally free from financial worries.

Otherwise, I have found plenty of information on Ruan Yuan. He kept copies of his official memorials, especially during the earlier years of his government career. We know he had not altered these records, because where both the published and the archival versions are extant, they were identical. Although it

has been satisfying to use the archival documents to check against published sources, it is still disappointing not to have a journal of his day-to-day thoughts and activities. The chronological account of his life and work recorded by his sons and pupils, *Diziji*, contains a wealth of information, but it is no substitute for a diary. Somehow the colour of daily life is missing.¹ Nor is there any writing of his true feelings on certain significant issues. On opium, for instance, the only non-official record available comprised remarks made to Liang Zhangju in a casual conversation.

Portraits

I still do not know anything about Ruan Yuan's physical appearance. There are two often reprinted black and white informal portraits executed during different stages of his life, in middle age (fifty-six *sui*) and in old age (eighty), but they do not tell anything about his height or weight.² The portraits do not give the impression of a tall man, although judging by the size of his male descendants I have met, and his North China origin, more likely than not he was at least of medium height. Yet, in one instance, he wrote about himself at thirty. 'I was small in stature and was very, very thin.'³ From the portraits he appeared to have gained some weight during his middle years, and he did become gaunt in old

1. This may not be fair, but I feel the lack of a diary especially keenly since I read the Pepys diary in the autumn of 2003 when I visited a special exhibition on Samuel Pepys and his contemporaries at the National Portrait Gallery in London.

2. As I was looking for illustrations in June 2005, Dr Patrick Connor of the Martyn Gregory, a London gallery specializing in China Trade paintings, sent me a coloured portrait of Ruan Yuan, a grand portrait in ceremonial dress of a second rank official, with summer hat and one feather on his collar. As shown by a colophon on the unsigned painting, his traditional Chinese portrait was executed when Ruan Yuan was Governor-General of Guangdong and Guangxi. In English, the subject is identified as 'Yuen, Viceroy of Canton'. As wonderful as this portrait is, its existence presents certain questions. The provenance of this portrait is impeccable. It was brought back to England by James Brabazon Urmston (1781–1849), 'President of the Honourable East India Company's affairs in China' during Ruan Yuan's tenure in Canton. Legend connected to the painting indicates that it was a parting gift from Ruan Yuan, with whom Urmston had an excruciating meeting on the *Topaz Affair* in 1822 (see Chapter 6). 'I had the better of him!' remarked Urmston. He seemed to have ignored the fact that Ruan Yuan had stopped British trade, and as a result, in 1823 the British issued an Order in Council for all naval vessels to stay out of Chinese waters. Questions arose: Qing regulations prohibited officials to meet foreigners except through the *hong* merchants, a stance supported by contemporary English-language accounts. Whether Ruan Yuan and Urmston actually met in person needs further investigation.

3. *YJSJ* Additional Supplement 3:14a–b. See also Chapter 13.

age, but he was never bent. His facial features were regular, with an angular nose and large, drooping eyes. He wore his hair in the requisite Qing fashion, shaved crown with a long braid, and a moustache with a whiskered beard. He did not wear his finger nails long in the affected fashion of the time, but, then, the only visible hand in all the portraits was his right. If he held a writing brush every day as he had claimed, how could he manage with long nails?

Findings

At the start of this work, I offered a quotation from *Confucian Personalities* (1962) by the late Professor Arthur F. Wright, which had inspired this biographical study of Ruan Yuan. Professor Wright had exhorted that ‘a single biographical study may bring into focus the critical problems and the atmosphere of an age’.⁴ In this study on Ruan Yuan, ‘the age’ meant the final years of the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century before opium became the dominant issue.

Politically, Qing rule had been firmly established by the Jiaqing reign but the dynasty was not trouble-free. The critical problems involved security and control in the provinces. There were periodic uprisings because the public had been resentful on certain issues. Financing projects including military campaigns and defence fortifications, which regular tax revenue could no longer cover, all became a part of Ruan Yuan’s experience. Problems like coastal piracy and famine relief were traditional responsibilities of the Chinese state and officialdom. What was new to the era, and for central policy makers as well as provincial officials like Ruan Yuan, were issues caused by actions taken by Western traders, and their governments also, as a part of the effort to expand into East Asia, a not-too-friendly encounter of two empires.

In general, the atmosphere had remained congenial for the gentry and the scholars. The best days for scholars were already past, as imperially sponsored compilations of major collections were over, although privately funded projects continued, they were on a much smaller scale. The breakthrough in abandoning classical study of the Song to Ming era of the eighteenth century had become generally accepted by the early nineteenth, scholarly discourses were not really commonplace. Ruan Yuan, as a high official with desire, funding and opportunities, was very much a part of the intellectual movement and ferment of the era.

What are my findings, then?

4. See ‘Introduction’ of this study on Ruan Yuan, note 1.

Personality

Ruan Yuan's personality was congenial. He was even tempered. Nutured and trained by his mother, he had total control of his emotions. I do not see him ranting and raving when his wishes were thwarted. On the other hand, considering his position, people did not often go against his wishes. He was said to have been awed⁵ by Wang Zhong, who was older by almost twenty years, and that was on account of Wang's brash mannerism. Handicapped by a speech problem as a young child, Ruan Yuan probably did not want to see Wang and stutter should he be asked a difficult question. So, instead of confrontation, Ruan Yuan chose to avoid Wang.⁶ Otherwise the only person to whom Ruan Yuan was recorded to have an aversion was Cao Zhenyong (曹振鏞 1755–1835).⁷ Apparently, this mutual antipathy, based ostensibly on disagreement over metropolitan examination assessment criteria, was generally known, even to the Daoguang Emperor, who did not recall Ruan Yuan to be physically present in the capital until after Cao's death, even though he had been appointed Grand Secretary several years previously.

Ruan Yuan was fortunate in that he lived a long and useful life. There was no compulsory retirement during the mid-Qing. As long as his health lasted, he was able to continue working into his mid-seventies. Even as his health deteriorated, the pain and disability were manageable. He had difficulties in walking, lost some hearing and had trouble with instant recall as well as what appeared to be a cataract, but he managed to enjoy full mental faculty, and read and wrote until the end. Judging by samples of calligraphy executed during his old age, his hand stayed steady until the very end of his life.

Like men, and women too, of his time, Ruan Yuan was superstitious. An example: when he was Director-General of Grain Transport, he reported to the emperor that 'the most responsive temples along the Grand Canal were those of the River God and the Wind God at Guazhou (瓜州). These gods have protected men and boats so well that there has been no mishap in two years. Therefore Your Majesty is requested to favour the temples with a plaque.'⁸ He remained

5. The Chinese term is 'afraid of' (*pa* 怕).

6. See Biography of Wang Zhong by Ling Tingkan. In *Guochao Qixian Leizheng Chubian* (國朝耆獻類徵初編) [Biographies of notables of the Qing dynasty] edited by Li Xun (李紱, 1884) *juan* 420. Ruan Yuan did print Wang's works years later.

7. See *Qingshi Gao* (清史稿), *Dachen zhuan* (大臣傳) 151:26; also *Qingchao Yeshi Daguan* (清朝野史大觀), vol. 7, p. 50; *Qingshi* (清史) 6:4516.

8. *Diziji* 4.

superstitious until the end, pasting good-luck sayings all over the house. Perhaps seeing the character for 'happiness' on a strip of red paper as he awoke each morning did make him more joyful.

As a Private Person

Ruan Yuan was a filial son, and a loving husband, judging by the poems he exchanged with his wife — despite the fact that he followed the contemporary custom of keeping concubines. A man of a strong sense of right and wrong, he appeared to have been a stern father with inflexible standards for his sons. None of his four sons attained to any success in his own right. Their offices were secured by their father, two through inheritance and two through purchase. To be fair, his only son by his wife, Ruan Konghou, was in the middle of taking the provincial examination when his father died and he had to leave the examination hall. Only one of the fifteen grandsons whose births were recorded in the *Diziji* passed the provincial level examination and held an office, but, then, the local gazetteer of Yangzhou did not manage to record all the achievements of notable people due to disturbances during the Taiping Rebellion. Perhaps it is harsh to charge a strong parent in stifling his son's growth and development; very few men in history could match Ruan Yuan's achievements. Whether Ruan Yuan's offspring tried to make it on their own, I did not manage to discover.⁹ He seemed to have allowed more open affection with the daughters, and the one grand-daughter mentioned in Chapter 11.

Ruan Yuan disliked large gatherings, certainly not with him as the centre of attention. Until his eightieth *sui* birthday, he had not allowed celebrations, always 'escaping his birthday' by going somewhere in retreat to escape well-wishers.

He had remained uncomplicated in what he liked. He found satisfaction in his official and scholarly attainments, but he also rejoiced in the smallest pleasures. His happiest moments were spent with scholarly friends discussing intellectual discoveries, or composing poems, on any topic that struck their fancy. He wrote a poem when he first tasted fresh lichee (荔枝), an exotic fruit he discovered in Canton:

9. I do know, however, that one of the fourth-generation descendants lived and worked in Shanghai. According to a descendant, he was a member of the Green Gang and controlled a gang of rickshaws. Perhaps Ruan Yuan's descendants began to work on the Grand Canal, which was controlled by the Green Gang, providing an example of the downward mobility of the later Qing and early Republican era.

The First Time I Tasted Lichee (1818)

Canton in late spring is warm and clear.
 I venture into the orchard to pick the new crop of lichee.
 Light green leaves are linking the jade green branches of the trees.
 The red fruit look just like bunches of coral.¹⁰

Another poem acknowledged glass window panes, a Western invention recently adopted in places such as Canton. Chinese windows, where privacy was not an issue, were covered by shutters in the winter, or oiled paper, and in warmer weather a thin layer of fabric. Otherwise they were left open.

Ode to the Glass Window (1818)

The horizon outside the glass windows appear to have no boundary,
 I know I am living in the greater world.¹¹

He was also impressed by the alarm clock and the telescope, and wrote whimsical poems celebrating these marvels.

As Scholar and Patron of Learning

As a scholar, without any doubt, Ruan Yuan's interests were all embracing. His contributions lay more in putting scholars together, leading to blossoming of ideas and publications, than in original intellectual postulating. We are told over and again how he paid personal attention to all the publications with his name as author, editor, or compiler, from conceptualization to the final proof-reading. However, with other scholars handling the actual research and writing, how can anybody be sure how much of the work was Ruan Yuan's? It does not mean that I am denigrating Ruan Yuan's scholarship, or indeed charging him with taking credit due to other people, but there is room for further investigations. Even if I accepted that all the proposals had originated from him unless otherwise indicated, and the major planning of the work as well, questions still remain on his judgement at times. Ruan Yuan viewed the ideas and information from a Confucian perspective, but this does not mean that he was always right. Perhaps I am not being fair but, for a scholar who insisted on evidence, he rejected at least one new idea and information on the basis that it did not fit into the Confucian classics. Almost three centuries after Copernicus (1473–1543) discovered that the earth rotated on its axis once every day and circled the sun

10. *YJSJ* 4:11.

11. *YJSJ* 4:11.

once every year, Ruan Yuan found such a notion, that the earth moved (*dong* 動) while the sun stood still (*jing* 靜), unacceptable because it was against the classical principle of order (*xun* 訓). He criticized Xu Guangqi (徐光啟 1562–1633), the Ming dynasty scholar official among whose achievements was the translation of Euclid's *Geometry* into Chinese, for accepting such Western theories so readily. Therefore, here are signs of Ruan Yuan's less-than-open-mind approach to new knowledge. Yet, he was able to acknowledge attainment of Western sciences and mathematics, especially because he found their information on astronomy and calendrical calculations introduced to China since the time of Matteo Ricci useful.¹²

Meanwhile, within the classical studies, Ruan Yuan was ready to test all points of view and therefore was able to come to a synthesis not only for his own conviction but also to influence the thinking of others. His efforts were of great value to the development of classical studies, a transition from Han Learning of the eighteenth century to Han-Song synthesis of the nineteenth. In addition, by insisting on practical and useful knowledge, and by writing on technological and scientific topics, and through his personal relationship with Gong Zizheng (龔自珍 1792–1841) and Wei Yuan, he could be said to be a precursor to the statecraft writers of the later decades of the century.¹³

As an Official

Ruan Yuan's career expanded more than fifty years. Further, because of his long service in several exposed strategic provinces, where responses to immediate and potential problems had to be formulated and tested, it is possible to delineate a significant issue of the day — security and control — for closer scrutiny. The problems he confronted as a governor or governor-general — including suppression of coastal piracy and secret societies, regardless of their criminal or seditious nature; jurisdiction over foreign nationals; foreign naval presence in Chinese waters and border disputes involving tributary states and ethnic minorities in the Southwest — were illustrative of those the Qing government had to deal with in establishing its policies on preservation of law and order.

Working with the emperor, Ruan Yuan attempted to find solutions to these problems by adopting measures within the framework of existing Chinese

12. *YJS*/Additional Supplement 2:1–4.

13. Ruan Yuan was close to Weng. In 1823, Weng had started to write the prologue to Ruan Yuan's *nianpu*. In 1839, Weng went to visit Ruan Yuan in Yangzhou. At that time, so the story went, Ruan Yuan was hard of hearing, but he would recover instantly whenever Weng appeared on the scene.

institutions and traditions, but was pragmatic to introduce modifications and innovations where he found them useful. There were successes. A clear and present danger threatening the empire, the pirates off the Zhejiang and Fujian coasts, traditional antagonists for Chinese officials, were eradicated in 1809 as a result of the diligent and competent conceptualization and administration of the defence measures. Unfortunately, the conditions that caused these problems were not removed. There was no time to alter basic institutions and practices, even if any reform were contemplated seriously as feasible measures.

Although he had succeeded in keeping opium out of the port of Canton, and the British navy away from the Chinese coast since 1823, he failed to check the flow of opium through the island of Lintin. Nor did he envisage the power that British commercial interests were able to marshal, resulting in their government deploying naval and military forces in support of their ventures in China. It was Ruan Yuan who assured the Qing court that, although the British possessed a superior navy, they would be powerless on land. Therefore, in dealing with antagonists whose institutions and methods of operation were wholly outside the Chinese experience, Ruan Yuan's failures were of great consequence. It must be kept in mind at this time, however, that Ruan Yuan was trained in the Confucian tradition, and, even if he had commanded a thorough understanding of the underlying economic, political, and social forces at play in China and internationally at that time, he was bound by the inflexible institutions and bureaucratic encumbrances of the empire. It is difficult to imagine that any such scholar-official of his time could have taken any action substantially different from the course Ruan Yuan did pursue. We do not perceive that kind of response from such officials until after the Opium War, and even then, only hesitant and partial ones.

Did Ruan Yuan Consider Himself More as an Official or a Scholar?

The two roles did not need to be in conflict. However, in his heart, I suspect, Ruan Yuan considered himself a scholar first, although he had to give top priority of his time and energy to official work. When Ruan Yuan was not involved in government or related work, in his own words, his time was expended on scholarly activities.

I have no time-consuming avocation. Nor am I blessed with a capacity to enjoy wine. Therefore, I tend to spend all my spare time with a brush in my hand, in the company of books and scholars.¹⁴

14. *Dingxiangting Bitan* (定香亭筆談) 4:1b–2.

So, he put his best efforts at official duties, and they were his job. His heart remained with scholarship. Qing calendar did not schedule weekends, nor were there days-off. If we go by the *Veritable Records*, we do not see anybody, not even the emperor, spending even the first day of Spring Festival 'taking it easy'.

In two instances, Ruan Yuan's government responsibilities interfered with his scholarly compilations. *Jingfu* (經邦), the thesaurus on terms from the *Thirteen Classics*, was never printed because he simply did not find the time to put it all together. The *Thirteen Classics with Commentary Essays* printed in Nanchang in 1817 (when he was shuttling to Changsha, to Wuchang, and to Canton, as the emperor moved him from one post to another), contained many errors because Ruan Yuan did not have time to supervise the final proofreading, or to proofread the text himself.

For Ruan Yuan, there was no choice between official work and scholarship. His achievements in both areas were extraordinary. His successes in scholarship were due to his myriad talents, but his government offices provided opportunities.

Relationship with the Emperors

Ruan Yuan's relationships with the emperors were worth studying as well. His career covered three reigns.

Under Qianlong, he was a graduate student and a very, very junior official whose academic attainments had happened to attract imperial attention. He became a favourite and was able to give Qianlong moments of pleasure, a discourse on a classical topic, or a comment on a painting. A few complimentary words and a couple of silk purses from the emperor were recorded with great excitement for posterity.

Ruan Yuan enjoyed a long and close relationship with Jiaqing. They worked hard in formulating and implementing policies on conducting the affairs of state. There were praises as well as admonitions from the emperor, but never any sense of intimacy. Although Ruan Yuan took his just desserts when he stepped out of line, personally the emperor gave him a great deal of 'face'. This goodwill between them made it possible for Ruan Yuan to handle the significant issues without undue hindrance from other officials.

To Daoguang, Ruan Yuan was a senior official suffering signs of ageing, who had served his father and grandfather, and whose experience he valued. The much younger emperor also respected his integrity. As a rule, Daoguang was considerate and deferential towards Ruan Yuan, and showed his appreciation by offering compliments and rewards whenever appropriate occasions arose.

The Era and the Issue of Dynastic Decline

What about the issue of ‘dynastic decline’? Susan Mann Jones and Philip Kuhn wrote:

Dynastic decline has been understood as an ebbing of centralized power and its accretion in the hands of regional satraps, a disruption of the balanced tension between state and society.¹⁵

In this sense, what this study has found is that, during the era Ruan Yuan was serving in strategic provinces handling pressing issues, the final arbiter of policies was the emperor. Although bureaucratic wheels ground in a most cumbersome way, when the emperor wished, red tape could be cut short or eliminated altogether when certain conditions were met. The official in the provinces implementing the particular policy would have to enjoy complete confidence of the emperor, and, this official would have to find financing for the programmes from local resource outside the regular tax revenue. Ruan Yuan was able to fulfil all these requirements in the provinces. The difficulties the rulers of this era, Jiaqing from the time of his father’s death in 1799 until his own death in 1820, and Daoguang from 1821 through the Opium War, had to handle were not totally of their own making. A number of problems had come as a result of policies and actions of the previous reigns.

Professor F. W. Mote, although admittedly not an ardent admirer of the Qianlong Emperor one hundred percent of the time, gave this comment:

For the Manchu Qing imperial dynasty and the Chinese Empire, this (the Qianlong) reign can be seen both as the culmination of dynastic greatness and as the forerunner of an era of deep trouble.¹⁶

What Mote meant, in today’s parlance, is that Qianlong was a hard act to follow. He had inherited wealth and power, and had extraordinary ability as well as an incomparable personality, and a long reign, to carry through all the ambitious programmes he had devised. His sons and grandson did not enjoy the same blessings. However, when the emperor and officials were conscientious, and when they were not disturbed by elements outside the Chinese experience, the Chinese system of provincial administration worked satisfactorily.

As the nineteenth century progressed into its fourth decade, it became evident that the Chinese Empire stood in the way of Western ambitions for

15. Jones and Kuhn, *CHOC* 10:1, p. 107.

16. Mote, *Imperial China* (1999), p. 912.

expansion into East Asia and the ensuing problems were more than the Daoguang Emperor could handle. Still even with the formidable challenges from the West, as Professor Bartlett had observed, the Grand Council, the major organ of the central government, continued to function until long after the Opium War.

After the Opium War (1839–42), the experienced council was in place to deal with the dynasty's final half-century of emergencies, wrought of great rebellions, infant emperors, regencies, and the intensified western intrusions.¹⁷

So, looking at this era as a transition, not necessarily in the downward direction, I like to close this study with a quotation from F. W. Mote:

The 18th century, and consequent endeavours continuing through the 19th and into the early 20th centuries, accomplished a vast reworking of classical texts, their commentaries, and related scholarship. That spilled over into critical examination of historical writings and, further, into the editing and annotating of many other kinds of writings, especially the belles lettres of all earlier periods. Bibliography and specialized lexicography also flourished. So much of Chinese high culture's written heritage was painstakingly examined and systematically edited for publication that today one studying any phase of pre-modern China usually takes the corpus of Qing period scholarship as the logical starting place.¹⁸

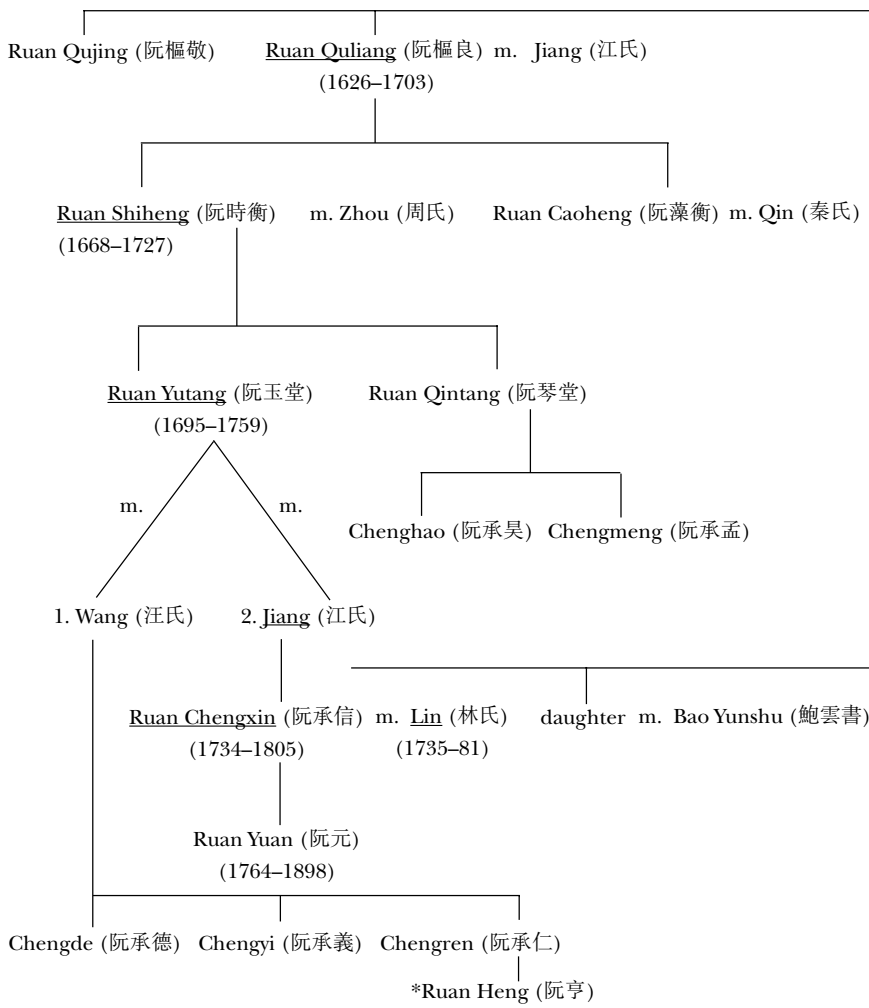
17. Bartlett, *Monarch and Ministers* (1991), p. 234.

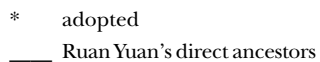
18. Mote, *Imperial China* (1999), p. 930.

APPENDICES

Appendix IA: Ruan Genealogy

Ancestors of Ruan Yuan

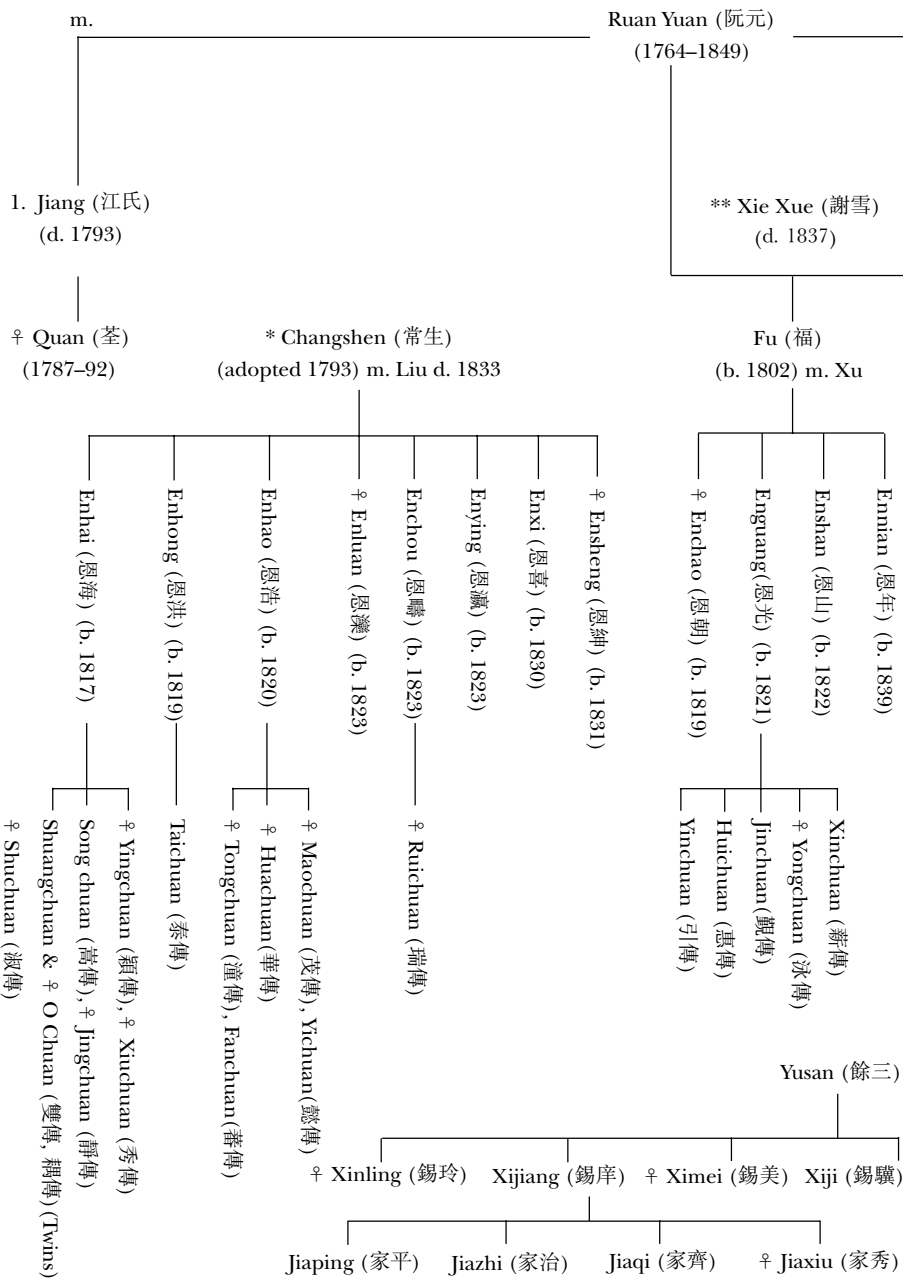


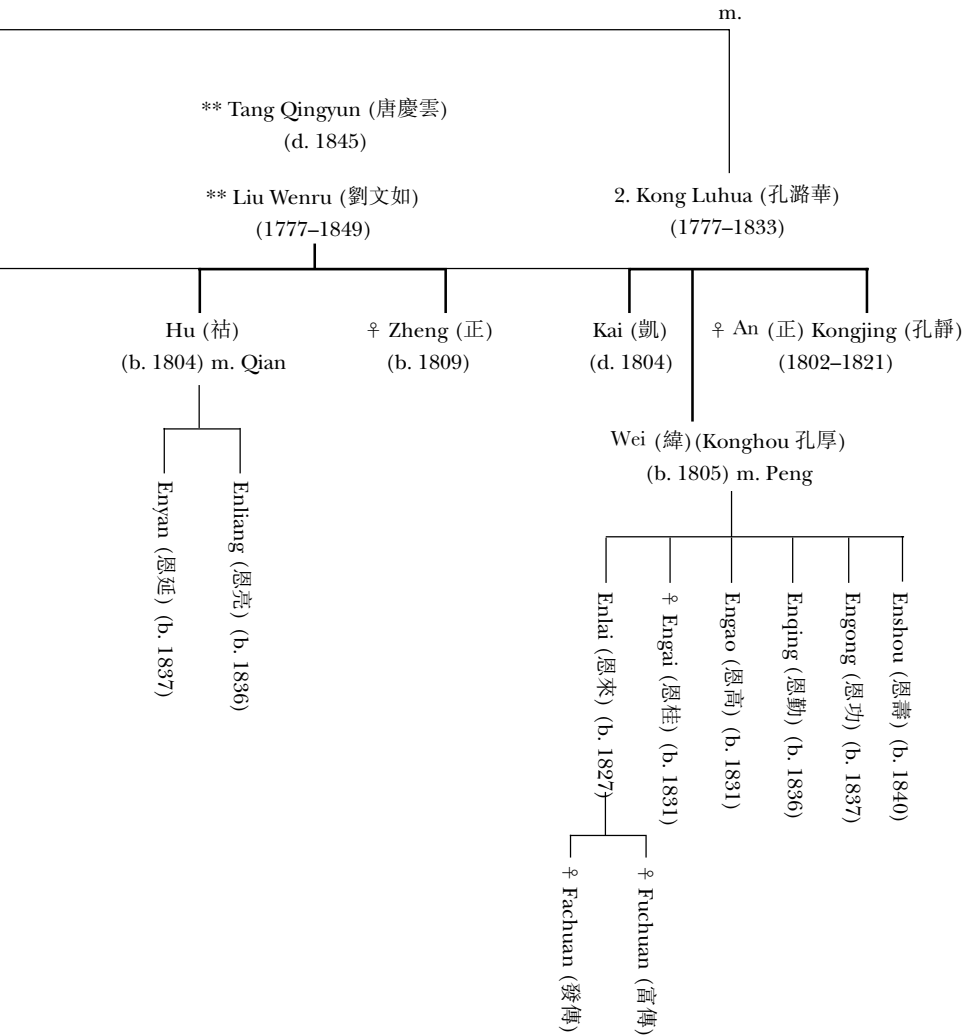


_____ Ruan Yuan's direct ancestors

Appendix IB: Ruan Genealogy

Descendants of Ruan Yuan

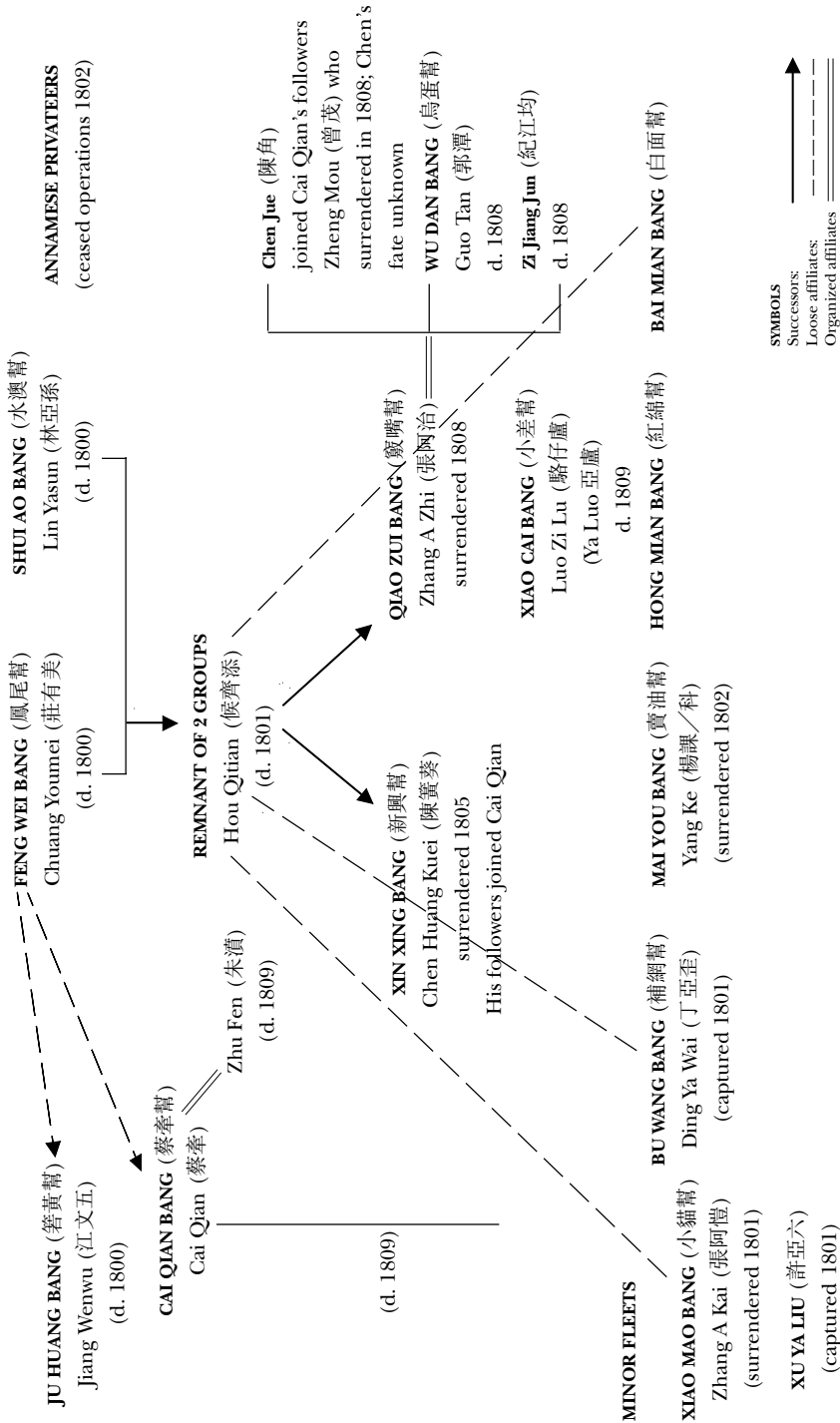




- * adopted
- ** concubine
- 女 female

Appendix II: Pirate Fleets in Zhejiang, 1796–1809

MAJOR FLEETS



Appendix III: Scholars Associated with Ruan Yuan

Works I consulted are listed below by their titles. Dates are given only when authenticated, suffice to say all were Ruan Yuan's contemporaries. For detailed information, please see Bibliography II and III. English Language: *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644–1912)*; Chinese Language: *Qingdai Puxue Dashi Liezhuan* (清代樸學大師列傳); *Guochao Shiren Zhenglu* (國朝詩人徵略); *Harvard-Yenching Index to Thirty-Three Collections of Ch'ing Dynasty Biographies*; *Qindai Beizhuanwen Tongjian* (清代碑傳文通檢); *Xuhaitang Wenji* (學海堂文集); *Gujing Jingshe Wenji* (詁經精舍文集); *Hangzhou Fuzhi* (杭州府志); *Leitang Anzhu Diziji* (雷塘庵主弟子記); *Guochao Qixian Leizheng Chubian* (國朝耆獻類徵初編); *Guochao Xianzheng Shilue* (國朝先正事略); *Hanxue Shichen Ji* (漢學師承記); *Xu Beizhuan Ji* (續碑傳集); *Qingshi Liezhuan* (清史列傳); *Qingshi Gao* (清史稿); *Qing Shi* (清史); *Xusuan Yangzhou Fuzhi* (續纂揚州府志); and the prefaces to Ruan Yuan's publications which list names of scholars working on the projects.

Bao Shichen (1775–1855) 包世臣
Bao Tingbo (1728–1814) 鮑廷博
Bi Heng 畢亨
Bi Yuan (1730–97) 畢沅
Cai Ruping 蔡如平
Cao Luanyang 曹鑾揚
Cha Fei 查飛
* Cha Kui (1770–1834) 查樸
Cha Shiguan 查世官

Che Yunlong 車雲龍
Chen Changqi (1743–1820) 陳昌齊
Chen Chuanjing 陳傳經
Chen Fengheng (1778–1855) 陳逢衡
* Chen Hongshou (1768–1822) 陳鴻壽
Chen Li (1810–82) 陳澧
Chen Mengzhao 陳夢照
Chen Qiacong (1809–69) 陳喬從
* Chen Shouqi (1777–1834) 陳壽祺

* On Ruan Yuan's Staff

** Ruan Family Member

Chen Songqing 陳嵩慶
 Chen Tong 陳同
 Chen Wenzhan 陳文湛
 * Chen Wenshu (1775–1845) 陳文述
 Chen Yuzhong (1762–84) 陳豫鍾
 Chen Zhan (1753–1817) 陳鱣
 * Cheng Bangxian 程邦憲
 Cheng Enze (1785–1837) 程恩澤
 Chen Jinfang (1718–84) 程晉芳
 Cheng Tongwen (d. 1823) 程同文
 Cheng Yaotian (1725–1814) 程姚田
 * Cheng Zanhe 程贊和
 * Cheng Zanning 程贊寧
 Cui Bi 崔弼
 Cui Shu (1740–1816) 崔述
 Cui Yingliu 崔應榴
 Da Shou (1791–1858) 達受
 Dai Cong 戴聰
 Dai Guangzeng 戴光曾
 Deng Chun 鄧淳
 * Ding Chuanjing 丁傳經
 * Ding Shoujing 丁授經
 Ding Yan (1794–1875) 丁晏
 Ding Zifu 丁子復
 Dong Gao (1740–1818) 董誥
 Dong Renjie 董人傑
 Duan Yu 段燠
 Duan Songling 段松苓
 Duan Yucai (1735–1815) 段玉裁
 * Duanmu Guohu (1773–1837) 端木國瑚
 * Fashi Shan (1753–1818) 法式善
 Fan Feng 樊封
 Fan Jingfu 范景福
 * Fang Dongshu (1772–1851) 方東樹
 Fang Guanxu 方觀旭
 Fang Maochao 方懋朝
 Fang Maosi 方懋嗣
 * Fang Pu 方漣
 Fang Qiqian 方起謙
 Fang Tinghu 方廷瑚
 Feng Dengfu (1783–1841) 馮登府
 Feng Pei 馮培
 Fu Xuexian 傅學瀛

Gong Zizhen (1792–1841) 龔自珍
 Gu Deyan 顧德言
 * Gu Guangqi (1776–1835) 顧廣圻
 * Gu Tinglun (1767–1854) 顧廷綸
 Gui Fu (1735–1805) 桂馥
 Gui Wencan (1823–84) 桂文燦
 *Guo Lin 郭麟
 Guo Pei 郭培
 Hao Yixing (1757–1825) 郝懿行
 He Landing 何蘭汀
 He Qijie 何其杰
 He Qiying 何啟瀛
 *He Yuanxi (1766–1829) 何元錫
 He Zhaoji (1800–74) 何兆基
 *He Zhiyun (1774–1820) 何治運
 Hong Kunxuan 洪坤暄
 Hong Tongsheng 洪桐生
 *Hong Yixuan (1765–1837) 洪頤煊
 *Hong Zhenxuan (1770–1815) 洪震瑄
 Hou Kang (1798–1834) 侯康
 Hu Baokun 胡寶琨
 Hu Bingji 胡秉繼
 Hu Diaode 胡調德
 Hu Fu 胡傅
 Hu Jin (1769–1845) 胡緝
 Hu Jinti 胡金題
 Hu Jing 胡敬
 Hu Kaiyi 胡開益
 Hu Su 胡儼
 * Hu Tingsen (1719–1803) 胡廷森
 Hu Yuanzao 胡元早
 Hua Ruihuang 華瑞黃
 Huang Chengji 黃承吉
 Huang Chunxi (1808–53) 黃春熙
 Huang Guangzong 黃光宗
 Huang Kaijun 黃凱鈞
 Huang Shi 黃奭
 * Huang Wenyang (b. 1736) 黃文暘
 Huang Yi (1744–1802) 黃易
 * Hung Yigui 黃一桂
 Huang Yu 黃鉉
 Huang Zigao 黃子高
 Ji Heng 稽璠

Ji Yun (1724–1805) 紀昀

* Jiang An 江安

Jiang Deliang (1752–93) 江德量

* Jiang Fan (1761–1831) 江藩

* Jiang Liu 江鏐

Jiang Ning 江寧

Jiang Suideng 姜遂登

Jiang Tong 蔣炯

* Jiang Zhengwei 蔣徵蔚

Jiao Tinghu (1782–1821) 焦廷虎

* Jiao Xun (1763–1820) 焦循

Jin E (1771–1819) 金鶚

Jing Tingdong 金廷棟

Jin Yanxu 金衍緒

Jin Yibao 金以報

Ju Pu 居溥

Ke Xiaoda 科孝達

Kong Guanglin (1746–after 1814) 孔廣林

Kong Guangsen (1752–86) 孔廣森

** Kong Luhua (1777–1833) 孔璐華

Lang Suifeng 郎遂鋒

Li Cheng 李誠

Li Daonan (1712–87) 李道南

Li Dou 李斗

Li Fangzhan 李方湛

Li Fusun (1764–1843) 李富孫

Li Gu 李穀

Li Guangzhao 李光照

Li Guoguang 黎國光

Li Qinghua 李清華

* Li Rui (1768–1817) 李瑞

Li Youqi 李有祺

Li Yingzhong 李應中

Li Yusun (1765–after 1839) 李遇孫

* Li Yun 李澐

Li Zhaosun 李照孫

Li Zhongkai 李中楷

* Li Zhongpei 李中培

Liang Guochen 梁國琛

Liang Guangzhao 梁光鈞

Liang Jiagui 梁家桂

Liang Jian 梁鑑

Liang Jie 梁傑

Liang Mei 梁梅

Liang Zhangju (1775–1849) 梁章鉅

Liang Zu'en 梁祖恩

Lin Botung (1775–1845) 林伯桐

Lin Chengdong 林成棟

* Lin Daoyuan 林道原

* Lin Shuzeng 林述曾

* Ling Kun (1794–1860) 凌堊

Ling Mingjie 凌鳴喈

* Ling Shu (1775–1829) 凌曙

Lin Yong 凌鏞

* Ling Tingkan (1755–1809) 凌廷堪

Liu Baonan (1791–1855) 劉寶楠

Liu Binhua 劉彬華

Liu Fenggao (1761–1830) 劉鳳誥

Liu Fenglu (1776?–1829) 劉逢祿

Liu Guangju 劉廣鉅

Liu Huanzhi (d. 1821) 劉鑲之

Liu Shusong 劉毓崧

Liu Taidou (1759–1814) 劉台斗

Liu Taigong (1751–1805) 劉台拱〔端臨〕

Liu Tianhui 劉天惠

** Liu Wenru (1777–1846) 劉文如

* Liu Wenqi (1789–1854) 劉文淇

Liu Xi 劉熙

Liu Xingen (1795–1880) 柳興恩

Liu Xiyu (1749–1840) 劉錫瑜

Liu Ying 劉瀛

Liu Yong (1720–1805) 劉墉

Liu Yusong (1818–67) 劉毓崧

Lu Bintao 盧彬濤

* Lu Jiluo (1772–1834) 陸繼駱

Lu Xiaochun 陸曉春

Lu Yan (d. 1832) 陸言

* Lu Yaoyu (1774–1836) 陸耀燾

Luo Lin 羅琳

* Luo Shilin (d. 1853) 羅士林

Ma Fu'an (1789–1846) 馬福安

Ma Liangyu 馬良宇

Ma Yu 馬鈺

Ma Zonglian (d. 1802) 馬宗璉

Mao Fengwu 毛鳳五

Mao Mo 毛謨

- Mei Zhizhi 梅植之
 Ni Liangyao (1792–1854) 倪良曜
 Ni Shou 倪綬
 Niu Shuyu (1760–1827) 紐樹玉
 Pan Guozhao 潘國詔
 Pan Xuemin 潘學敏
 Peng Yuanrui (1731–1803) 彭元瑞
 Qi Lin (1762–1828) 漆璘
 Qian Baofu (1777–1827) 錢寶甫
 Qian Daxin (1728–1804) 錢大昕
 Qian Dazhao (1744–1813) 錢大昭
 Qian Dian (1744–1806) 錢玷
 Dian Dongbi (b. 1766) 錢東壁
 Qian Fu (1754–1806) 錢馥
 Qian Fulin 錢福林
 Qian Lin (1762–1828) 錢林
 Qian Taiji (1791–1863) 錢泰吉
 Qian Tang (1735–90) 錢塘
 Qian Yiji (1783–1850) 錢儀吉
 Qian Yong (1759–1844) 錢泳
 Qian Yue 錢樾
 Qiao Chunling (1752–94) 喬椿齡
 Qin Enfu (1760–1843) 秦恩復
 Qin Ying (1743–1821) 秦瀛
 Ren Dachun (1738–89) 任大椿
 Ren Zhaolin 任兆麟
 ** Ruan Changsheng (d. 1833) 阮常生
 Ruan Chong (1826–92) 阮充
 ** Ruan Fu (b. 1802) 阮福
 ** Ruan Heng (1783–1856) 阮亨
 Ruan Ke (b. 1812) 阮克
 * Ruan Honghang 阮鴻行
 Ruan Xian (1814–93) 阮先
 * Ruan Yinzeng 阮蔭曾
 Shao Baochu 邵保初
 Shao Baohe 邵保和
 Shao Jinhan (1743–96) 邵晉涵
 Shen Chen 沈宸
 Shen Erzhen 沈爾振
 Shen Hedou 沈河斗
 Shen Ling 沈齡
 Shen Shusun 沈疏蓀
 * Shi Guoqi (1750–1824) 施國祁
 Shi Huaibi 石懷璧
 Shi Bin 施彬
 Shi Yingxin 施應心
 Song Baochun (1748–1817) 宋葆醇
 Song Xianxi 宋咸熙
 Song Xiang (1756–1826) 宋湘
 Su Lin 蘇琳
 Su Yingheng 蘇應亨
 Sun Chengyan 孫成彥
 Sun Dongyang 孫東陽
 Sun Fengqi (1745–1819) 孫鳳起
 Sun Mei 孫梅
 * Sun Shao (1752–1817) 孫韶
 Sun Shilun 孫事倫
 Sun Tongyuan 孫同元
 Sun Xingyan (1753–1818) 孫星衍
 Sun Zengmei 孫曾美
 Sun Zhizu (1737–1801) 孫志祖
 Tan Chunyuan 談春元
 Tan Tai 談泰
 *Tan Ying (1800–71) 譚瑩
 Tang Jinzhao (1772–1856) 湯金釗
 Tang Lixiang 湯禮祥
 Tang Sui 湯燧
 Tang Xifan 湯錫蕃
 Tao Dingshan 陶定山
 Tong Guangqi 童光起
 *Tong Huai 童槐
 Tong Huang 童璜
 Tong Renjie 童人傑
 Tu Zhuo 屠倬
 Wang Chang (1725–1806) 王昶
 Wang Chun 王純
 Wang Danchi 王丹墀
 Wang Duanlu 王端履
 Wang Jicong 王季聰
 Wang Jipei (d. 1819) 王繼培
 Wang Jiaxi (1775–1816) 汪家禧
 Wang Jie (1725–1805) 王杰
 Wang Niansun (1744–1832) 王念孫
 Wang Pinzhen 王聘珍
 Wang Ren 王仁
 Wang Rujin (1755–1811) 王如金

Wang Ruyuan 汪如淵
 Wang Shushi 王樹實
 Wang Shuzeng 王述曾
 Wang Song (1752–1837) 王崧
 Wang Tingzhen (1757–1827) 王廷珍
 Wang Wenchao 王文潮
 Wang Wengao (b. 1764) 王文杲
 Wang Wentai (1796–1844) 王文台
 Wang Yanmei (1776–1830) 王衍梅
 Wang Yinzhi (1766–1834) 王引之
 Wang Yu (1768–1826) 王豫
 Wang Zhong (1745–94) 汪中
 Wei Yuan (1794–1857) 魏源
 Wen Chun 溫純
 Weng Fanggang (1783–1818) 翁方綱
 Weng Shupeí (1765–1811) 翁樹培
 Wu Chengxun 吳成勳
 Wu Daban 吳大本
 *Wu Dongfa 吳東發
 Wu Jie 吳傑
 Wu Keqin 吳克勤
 Wu Kuiguang 吳奎光
 Wu Lanxiu (*juren* 1808) 吳蘭修
 *Wu Shucheng 吳書成
 Wu Songliang (1754–1816) 吳崧梁
 Wu Wenjian 吳文健
 * Wu Wenpu 吳文溥
 * Wu Xiqi (1746–1818) 吳錫麒
 Wu Yi (1745–99) 武億
 * Wu Yingkui 吳應達
 Wu Yinnian 吳引年
 Wu Yue 吳岳
 Wu Zengguan 吳曾貫
 Wu Zhuo 鄒倬
 * Xiang Yong 項墉
 Xiao Lingyu 蕭令裕
 * Xie Guangfu 謝光傅
 Xie Jiang 謝江
 Xie Huai 謝淮
 Xie Lansheng (1760–1831) 謝蘭生
 Xie Niangong 謝念功
 Xie Yong (1719–95) 謝墉
 Xiong Jinxing 熊景星

Xu Bitang 徐碧堂
 Xu Dayou 徐大酉
 Xu Fu 徐復
 Xu Heng 徐珩
 * Xu Kaiye (d. 1839) 徐開業
 * Xu Kun (1762–1803) 徐鯤
 * Xu Liangkui (1730–1822) 徐聯奎
 Xu Longfeng 徐龍風
 Xu Naigeng 許乃賡
 Xu Naiji (1777–1839) 許乃濟
 Xu Naipu (d. 1866) 許乃普
 Xu Qing 徐青
 Xu Rong 徐榮
 Xu Rongqing 徐榮慶
 * Xu Xiongfei (1762–1835) 徐熊飛
 * Xu Yanghao 徐養灝
 * Xu Yangyuan (1758–1825) 徐養原
 * Xu Zongyan (1768–1818) 許宗彥
 Xu Zulu 金祖蔭
 Yan Chonggui 嚴崇葵
 Yan Guangzhao 嚴光照
 * Yan Jie (1763–1816) 嚴杰
 Yan Jiuqing 言九經
 Yan Li 顏立
 Yan Sizong 顏斯總
 * Yan Wenzhao 嚴文照
 * Yang Bingchu 楊秉初
 * Yang Changxu 楊昌緒
 * Yang Fengbao (1755–1816) 楊鳳苞
 Yang Maojian 楊懋建
 Yang Pan 楊蟠
 Yang Shiji 楊時濟
 Yang Wensun (1782–1853) 楊文蓀
 Yang Zhixin 楊知新
 Yao Jinyuan 姚覲元
 Yao Wentian (1758–1827) 姚文田
 Yao Zhang 姚樟
 Yao Zhiling 姚之麟
 Ye Menglong (1776–1832) 葉夢龍
 Yi Kezhong (1793–1834) 儀克中
 Yu Baohua 俞保華
 Yu Zhengluan (1775–1840) 余正樂
 * Yu Zhuo 俞卓

Yong Xing (1752–1823) 永瑍

Yuan Jun 袁鈞

Zang Litang (1776–1805) 臧禮堂

* Zang Yong [tang] (1767–1811)
臧庸〔鏞堂〕

Zeng Zhao (d. 1854) 曾釗

Zhang Hui 張慧

Zhang Huiyan (1761–1802) 張惠言

* Zhang Jian (1768–1850) 張鑑

Zhang Jieyuan 張解元

Zhang Liben 張立本

Zhang Menggen 張孟淦

Zhang Mu (1805–49) 張穆

Zhang Qihan 張其翰

Zhang Rufang 張汝房

Zhang Ruocai 張若采

Zhang Shiyuan (1755–1824) 張士元

Zhang Shu (1781–1847) 張澍

* Zhang Shuo 張杓

Zhang Tingji (1768–1848) 張廷濟

* Zhang Xingyong 張興鏞

* Zhang Xu 張詡

Zhang Xuecheng (1738–1801) 章學誠

Zhang Yanchang 張燕昌

* Zhang Yanzhen 張彥真

Zhang Yin (1741–1807) 張因

* Zhang Zhaocen 張肇岑

Zhao Bingzhong 趙秉中

Zhao Chunyi 張春沂

Zhao Huaiyu (1747–1823) 趙懷遇

Zhao Jun 趙昀

Zhao Tan (1765–1828) 趙坦

* Zhao Wei (1746–1825) 趙魏

Zheng Fen 鄭棻

Zheng Hao 鄭灝

* Zheng Xian 鄭顯

Zheng Xun 鄭勳

* Zhong Dayuan (c. 1774–c. 1829) 鍾大源

Zhong Huai (1761–1805) 鍾懷

Zhong Qishao 鍾起韶

Zhou Gao 周誥

Zhou Jiangong 周建功

Zhou Liankui 周聯奎

Zhou Shilian 周師濂

Zhou Yiqing 周以清

Zhou Yunzhi 周雲幟

Zhou Zan 周瓚

* Zhou Zhiping 周治平

* Zhou Zhongfu (1768–1831) 周中孚

Zhou Zhuan 周瓚

Zhu Bin (1753–1834) 朱彬

Zhu Gui (1731–1807) 朱珪

Zhu Henian (1760–1834) 朱鶴年

Zhu Jiale 褚嘉樂

Zhu Jian (1769–1850) 朱珣

Zhu Shiyan (1771–1838) 朱士彥

Zhu Shizhi 朱軾之

* Zhu Weibi (1771–1840) 朱為弼

Zhu Wenhan 朱文翰

* Zhu Wenzao (1735–1806) 朱文藻

Zhu Xigeng (b. 1762) 朱錫庚

Zhu Yun (1729–81) 朱筠

Appendix IV: Ruan Yuan's Publications

An attempt is being made to list here in accordance with modern library classification schemes all of Ruan Yuan's publications. This list includes major works as well as short essays with Ruan Yuan as author, compiler or editor which I have seen personally.

This classification scheme, when applied to Ruan Yuan's publications, is not totally satisfactory since many of the works can fit into more than a single category. Titles listed on their own may have also been included in collected works. However, in listing Ruan Yuan's publications, I have decided not to allow some of the most prominent works of Ruan Yuan disappear into the anthologies merely because they were short, hence some of the titles are listed more than once. The English terms are taken from 'A Classified Guide to the Thirteen Classes of Chinese Prose' by E. D. Edwards.¹ The Arabic numeral following each entry indicates the number of *juan*, if the work comprises more than one.

Anthologies (集)

Yanjing Shiji (擘經室集) [Collection of essays and poems from the Yanjing studio to peruse the Classics] 40. This collection at first comprised three series (*ji* 集); later was supplemented by several more, printed during Ruan Yuan's lifetime and after his death. *Siji* (四集): essays 2, poems 8; *Xuji* (續集) [Supplement] 11; *Zai Xji* (再續集) [Additional Supplement]: essays 2, poems 2; *Waiji* (外集) [Extra supplement] 5.

Wenxuanlou Congshu (文選樓叢書) [Collected Works from the Wenxuan Pavilion].

This collection of works by Ruan Yuan and other scholars was printed in 1842 in Yangzhou, under the imprint of Ruan Yuan's studio and the editorship

1. E. D. Edwards, 'A Classified guide to the Thirteen Classe of Chinese Prose', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and Asiatic Studies* (1948), pp. 777–88.

of his cousin, Ruan Heng. Thirty-two titles are in this collection. Only works by Ruan Yuan are noted here. For details, see each title under the categories.

- *Yanjing Shiji*
- *Yanjing Shi Xuji*, including Additional Supplement
- *Gujing Jingshe Wenji* (詁經精社文集)
- *Yili Shijing Xiaokanji* (儀禮石經校勘記)
- *Qijing Mengzi Kaowen Bing Buyi* (七經孟子考文並補遺)
- *Zengzi Shipian Zhushi* (曾子十篇注釋)
- *Yanjing Shi Shilu* (擘經室詩錄)
- *Huaihai Yingling Ji* (淮海英靈集)
- *Dingxiangting Bitan* (定香亭筆談)
- *Xiaocanglang Bitan* (小滄浪筆談)
- *Guangling Shishi* (廣陵詩事)
- *Bazhuan Yinguan Kezhujì* (八磚吟館刻燭記)
- *Chouren Zhuan* (疇人傳)
- *Diqiu Tushuo* (地球圖說)
- *Jiguzhai Zhongding Yiqi Kuanshi* (積古齋鐘鼎彝器款識)
- *Xiaolanghuan Congji* (小琅環叢記)
- *Wenbi Kao* (文筆考)
- *Huashan Beikao* (華山碑考)
- *Shiqu Suibi* (石渠隨筆)
- *Zhouwu Zhuanding Minkao* (周吳專鼎銘考)

Archaeology and Epigraphy (考古金石銘文)

Shanzuo Jinshi Zhi (山左金石志) [Inscriptions on bronze and stone from Shandong] 24

Liangzhe Jinshi Zhi (兩浙金石志) [Inscriptions on bronze and stone from Zhejiang] 18 + 1

Xieshi Zhongding Kuanshi (薛氏鐘鼎款識) [Identification of inscriptions on bronze vessels by Mr Xie]

(Wang Fuzhai) *Zhongding Kuanshi* (王復齋) (鐘鼎款識) [Identification of Inscriptions on Bronze Vessels by Wang Fuzhai] 30 leaves

Jiaoshan Dintao Dingkao (焦山定陶鼎考) [An examination of a ceramic vessel at Jiaoshan]

Jiguzhai Zhongding Yiqi Kuanshi (積古齋鐘鼎彝器款識) [Identifications in the Jigu Studio inscriptions on bronze vessels] 10

Jiguzhai Cangqi Mu (積古齋藏器目) [List of vessels in the collection of the Jigu Studio]

Hanyanxi XiYue Huashan Beikao (漢延熹西嶽華山碑考) (A study of a Han dynasty stele at the Hua Mountain) 4

Ruanshi Jiguzhai Hantong Yinde (阮氏積古齋漢銅印得) [Collection of ancient Han dynasty bronze seals in the Jigu Studio of the Ruan Family] 2 ce (冊)

Bubi Tushi (布幣圖識) [Identification of pictures on ancient money]

Yuedong Jinshi Lue (粵東金石略) [A study of inscriptions on stone in Guangdong] 16

Han Shijing Canzi (漢石經殘字) (Reminant from a stone stele of the Han period)

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Shiqu Suibi (石渠隨筆) (Collation notes of imperial collection of paintings and calligraphy) 8

Shandong Xuezheng Ruan Yuntai Shi Tongsheng Shumu (山東學政阮芸台示童生書目) [Catalogue of books for young students in Shandong compiled by Ruan Yuan]

Siku Weishou Shumu Ti Yao (四庫未收書目提要) (Weiwan Bican 委菀筆藏) [Abstracts of books not in the Siku Quanshu sent by Ruan Yuan]

Tianyige Shucang Shumu (天一閣書藏書目) [Catalogue of the Tianyi Ge collection]

Hangzhou Lingyinsi Shucang Shumu (杭州靈隱寺書藏書目) [Catalogue of the Lingyin Monastery collection of books] 6

Jiaoshan Shucang Shumu (焦山書藏書目) [Catalogue of the collection at the Jiaoshan Monastery] 6

Wenxuanlou Cangshuji (文選樓藏書記) [Catalogue of the Wenxuan Lou collection] 6

Biography (傳記)

Chouren Zhuan (疇人傳) [Biographies of mathematicians and astronomers] 46

Guoshi Rulin Zhuangao (國史儒林傳稿) [Draft biographies of scholars in the Historiography Office]

Guoshi Wen Yuan Zhuangao (國史文苑傳稿) [Draft biographies of literati in the Historiography Office]

Gaozeng Zhaoyong Jiangjun Gaozu Fuxun Taifujun Xingshu (誥曾昭勇將軍高祖孚循太府君行述) [Biography of grandfather]

- Gaozeng Guanglu Dafu Hubu Zuoshilang Xiankao Xiangpu Fujun Xianpi Yipin Furen Lin Furen Xinzhuang* (誥贈光祿大夫戶部左侍郎顯考湘圃府君顯妣一品夫人林夫人行狀) [Biographies of parents]
- Jingyin Daoren Zhuan* (淨因道人傳) [Biography of the wife of Ruan Yuan's friend Huang Wenyang 黃文暘]
- Xieyong Mouzhimin* (謝壩墓誌銘) [Epitaph of Xie Yong]
- Taifu Tirenge Daxueshi Daxing Zhuwen Zhenggong Shendao Bei* (太傅體仁閣大學士大興朱文正公神道碑) [Memorial essay of Zhu Gui]

Classics (經學)

- Kaogongji Juzhi Tujie* (考工記車制圖解) [Explanations of illustrations in the *Kaogong Ji*] 2
- Yili Shijing Jiaokan Ji* (儀禮石經校勘記) [Collation notes on *Yili*] 4
- Zheshi Jiejing Lu* (浙士解經錄) [Essays on the classics written by scholars in Zhejiang] 5
- Zhejiang Kaojuan* (浙江考卷) [Examination essays in Zhejiang]
- Zengzi Shipian Zhushu* (曾子十篇注疏) [Ten essays by Zeng Zi] 4 + 1
- Lunyu Lunren Lun* (論語論仁論) [Discourse on the term 'ren' in the *Analects*]
- Mengzi Lunren Lun* (孟子論仁論) [Discourse on the term 'ren' in *Mencius*]
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- Shishu Guxun* (詩書古訓) and *Xingmin Guxun* (性命古訓) [Essays on concepts]
- Huangqing Jingjie* (皇清經解) [Essays on the Classics written by scholars of the Qing dynasty] 1,400
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- Sanjiashi Buyi* (三家詩補遺) [Remnants from the Classic of Odes of Three Schools] 3
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- Yili Sangfu Dagong Zhangzhuan Zhuchuan Wukao* (儀禮喪服大功章傳注舛誤考) [Discourse on mourning clothes worn by relatives of various degrees]

Dictionaries (辭典)

Jingji Zuangu (經籍纂詁) [Dictionary of classical terms]² 106

Jingji Zuangu Buyi (經籍纂詁補遺) [Supplement to the dictionary of classical terms] 10

Shisanjing Jingfu (十三經經邦) [Dictionary of terms and phrases from the Thirteen Classics] not printed as a complete work

History and Geography (歷史地理)

Chongxiu Biao Zhongguan Ji (重修表忠觀記) [To commemorate the reconstruction of the Daoist shrine]

Chongxiu Gaomi Zhenggong Cibe (重修高密鄭公祠碑) [Stele to commemorate the reconstruction of the shrine of Zheng Xun at Gaomi]

Chongxiu Huiji Dayu Lingmiao Beiji (重修會稽大禹陵廟碑記) [Stele to commemorate the repair and reconstruction of the stele at King Yu's tomb at Huiji]

Chongjian Yangzhou Huiguan Beimin (重建揚州會館碑銘) [To commemorate the reconstruction of the Yangzhou hostel]

Yingzhou Shuji (瀛舟書記) [Anti-piracy records kept at the Yingzhou studio] 12

Yangcheng Riri (洋程日記) [Diary from Yang Cheng] 2

Zhejiang Tukao (浙江圖考) [Study of old landmarks in Zhejiang] 3

Jiahe Tuba (嘉禾圖跋) [Celebrate the bumper harvest with a picture]

Huang Qing Beiban Lu (皇清碑版錄) [Copy of tomb stones of the Qing dynasty] 50

Leitang Ruanshi Mutu Ji (雷塘阮氏墓圖記) [A record of the Ruan family tombs at Leitang with map]

Beihu Gongdaoqiao Ruanshi Mutu Ji (北湖公道橋阮氏墓圖記) [A record of the Ruan family tombs at Gongdao Bridge with map]

Xiu Leitang Sui Yangdi Ling Ji (修雷塘隋煬帝陵記) [To commemorate the discovery and reconstruction of the tomb of the Yangdi Emperor of the Sui dynasty]

Liangzhe Zengzai Ji (兩浙賑災記) [Record of famine relief in Zhejiang]

2. There is no record on how Ruan Yuan managed to gain forgiveness from the Jiaqing Emperor in 1812 after the Liu Fenggao Affair in 1809. Apparently Ruan Yuan printed a new edition of this dictionary in 1812–4, and dedicated it to the emperor. In the front of the book, before the preface, there was a memorial from Ruan Yuan on this new edition.

- Jiangxi Gaijian Gongyuan Haoshe Beiji* (江西改建貢院號舍碑記) [Commemorating the reconstruction of the examination hall in Jiangxi]
- Gaijian Guangdong Gongyuan Haoshe Beiji* (改建廣東貢院號舍碑記) [Commemorating the reconstruction of the examination hall in Guangdong]
- Diqiu Tushuo* (地球圖說) [Explanation of a map of the world]
- Liangzhe Fanghu (Lingqin Cimu) Lu* (兩浙防護〔陵寢祠墓〕錄) [Record on conservation of graves in Zhejiang]
- Guangdong Tongzhi* (廣東通志) (Comprehensive provincial gazetteer of Guangdong) 334
- Yunnan Tongzhi Gao* (雲南通志稿) (Draft Comprehensive provincial gazetteer of Yunnan) 216
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- Yangzhou Wenlouxiang Mozhuang Kao* (揚州文樓巷墨莊考) [Examination into an old stationery shop on Wenxuan Lane of Yangzhou]

Letters (信函)

- Ruan Wenda Gong Zhishihou Jiashu* (阮文達公致仕後家書). [Informal notes written to members of his family after his retirement]

Literature (文學)

- Xiaocanglang Bitan* (小滄浪筆談) [Writings from the Xiao Cang Lang Pavilion] 4
- Shanzuo Shike* (山左詩課) [Poems from Shandong] 4
- Zhejiang Shike* (浙江詩課) [Poems from Zhejiang] 4
- Huaihai Yingling Ji* (淮海英靈集) [Collection of poems by the brave souls of the Huaihai region] 22
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- Liangzhe Youxuan Lu* (兩浙輶軒錄) [Collection of poets in Zhejiang] 40
- Jiangsu Shizheng* (江蘇詩徵) [Collection of poets in Jiangsu] 183
- Guangling Shishi* (廣陵詩事) [Collection of poets in Yangzhou] 10
- Langhuan Xiguan Shi* (琅環僊館詩) (Unpublished poems at the Langhuanxian studio)

Science and Technology (科技)

Hai Yun Kao (海運考) [Ruan Yuan's ideas on shipping tribute grain by sea]

Liangchuan Liangmi Kao (糧船量米考) [Essays on the most efficient way to store grain in the tribute ships]

Hangzhou Wenmiao Buzhong Ji (杭州文廟鋪鐘記) [Account on repairs to the bell of the Confucian Temple in Hangzhou]

Miscellaneous Writings (其他)

Weiyu Shushi Suibi Zhu (味餘書室隨筆注) [Compilation notes Ruan Yuan wrote for this work by the Jiaqing Emperor]. 'Weiyu Shushi' was the name given by the emperor to the Imperial Study.

Shihua Ji (石畫記) [Descriptions of 'pictures' on stone, formed by coloration on marble in Ruan Yuan's collection]

Nanbei Shupai Lun (南北書派論) [Discourse on the styles of the North and South schools of calligraphy]

Beibei Nantie Lunzhu (北碑南帖論注) [Discourse on calligraphic styles]

Appendix V: The Liu Fenggao Affair

In September 1809 Ruan Yuan was dismissed by the Jiaqing Emperor from the governorship of Zhejiang and recalled to Beijing. While the emperor's ire was not permanent, the disgrace of this dismissal, over the mishandling of an affair involving Liu Fenggao (劉鳳誥 1761–1830), was serious. What happened? The existence of documents of the case has made it possible to venture an analysis.

Ruan Yuan's career had been made by the Jiaqing Emperor. He was one of the emperor's most trusted officials. They were about the same age, had known each other for some time, and had shared the tutelage and friendship of Zhu Gui. They had worked together well since the emperor came to the throne a decade earlier, as the decline of pirate threat off the Zhejiang coast illustrated, even though the threat was not completely removed from the Guangdong coast until 1810. In addition, Ruan Yuan had made notations on the emperor's work, *Weiyu Shuwu Suibi* (未餘書屋隨筆) [Incidental writings of the Suibi Studio]. So their relationship had extended beyond the official arena.

Zhu Gui died in 1807. There is no assurance that Ruan Yuan would have been saved from dismissal in 1809 had Zhu been alive. In any case, the 'Liu Fenggao Affair' can be used as an illustration of the fragility of relationships between a Qing official and his emperor.

All had seemed well in 1808. Immediately before Ruan Yuan returned to Zhejiang for his second term as Governor, the emperor had sent him to Henan to make a special audit of the treasury funds there. This assignment was more significant than it met the eye at first glance, because Henan was a central depository of silver. Geographically the province was in the centre of the empire. It was away from the exposed borders and the coast, and it would be much faster to deploy the silver from Henan to where it was needed. There was a standing order to send accumulations of silver there. 'An earlier imperial edict had instructed the Governor of Zhejiang to send the silver collected from the Customs to Henan every time it amounted to 100,000 taels.'¹ The Jiaqing Emperor, therefore, had to send someone whom he trusted completely to go to Henan to

conduct the audit. The emperor had been effusive with Ruan Yuan. When the latter reported his safe arrival at Zhejiang in April 1808, the emperor sent this message: 'It is of great comfort to me to imagine how happy the people of Zhejiang must feel to have such an honest and sincere official among them again.'² Yet, in just a little over a year, Ruan Yuan was dismissed.

The other central figure in the affair, Liu Fenggao, was not an insignificant name to the Jiaqing Emperor either. He was Zhu Gui's son-in-law, but was not a likeable personality. Liu was Ruan Yuan's classmate, a metropolitan graduate of 1789. His wife was a daughter of Zhu Gui. He had performed brilliantly in all the civil service examinations, but his career had lacked lustre. He had always had a tendency to drink too much. Presumably, his bragging about his personal relationship with Ruan Yuan had earned the resentment and jealousy of his colleagues. His lack of human relationship skills had offended others.

Liu was Director of Studies in Zhejiang in 1809. As Ruan Yuan was in the final stages of finishing off the pirate Cai Qian. Believing that he could not leave the command post on the coast, he had memorialized the emperor to permit Liu to be completely responsible for the provincial examinations in his stead.³ Apparently Liu had known the family or relatives of one of the candidates surnamed Xu who had asked to be assigned to a cubicle in the examination hall close to someone he knew. A promise was supposed to have been made that, if Xu placed well, Liu would be 'thanked' in tangible terms.

Meanwhile, a censor, Lu Yan (陸言), was in Zhejiang and was told of this act of corruption by Liu's subordinates, who also complained about other aspects of Liu's behaviour when he was under the influence of alcohol. Corruption involving any aspect of the civil service examination was a serious offence, so the censor immediately sent a memorial to the emperor.⁴ The emperor sent a confidential message via a court letter to Ruan Yuan. Ruan Yuan's reply, also sealed, denied an intimate friendship with Liu, but exonerated the latter, claiming the censor's reports that Liu was taking bribes were false.⁵ Special emissaries sent by the emperor investigated the matter and confirmed the facts in the censor's original

1. GZD - JQ 007919 (JQ7/4/12 [1802/5/23]), memorial from Ruan Yuan and Yanfeng (延豐).

2. Vermilion endorsement on GZD - JQ 010345 (JQ13/3/29 [1808/4/24]), memorial from Ruan Yuan. See also *Diziji* 3:4.

3. GZD - JQ011598 (JQ13/7/25 [1808/9/16]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

4. GZD - JQ014602 (JQ14/6/29 [1809/8/6]), memorial from Lu Yan, Censor. Lu was a student in Zhejiang when Ruan Yuan was Director of Studies earlier, so he had no choice but to report any possible collusion lest he be blamed for protecting both Ruan and Liu.

5. GZD - JQ014647 (JQ14/6/29 [1809/8/10]), memorial from Ruan Yuan.

report.⁶ As a result, Liu was sent into exile in Heilongjiang, and Ruan Yuan was dismissed from the governorship and recalled to Beijing.⁷ The emperor admonished Ruan Yuan for giving priority to personal friendship over his loyalty to the emperor.

Ruan Yuan, on the other hand, had failed to show good sense in his casual response to the emperor on a serious charge of corruption. Zhu Gui was not at court any more, so there was no strong spokesman on his behalf, especially when the emperor was angry. Even had Zhu Gui been alive, given the fact that Liu was his son-in-law, and with such overwhelming evidence against his conduct, would he have been able even to contemplate mounting a defence?

Probably Ruan Yuan was taking the emperor's good will for granted. His post at Zhejiang was a lucrative one. The silk, tea, and salt trade must have added substantially to his 'extra income' as governor. Perhaps court officials with access to the emperor's ear wished to replace Ruan Yuan with their own men. Furthermore, there were officials who opposed his defence policies. Ruan Yuan and his military colleague, Li Changgeng (李長庚), had offended supporters of Manchu officials in Zhejiang and Fujian. The Governor-General of Zhejiang and Fujian, Yude (玉德) and his successor Alinbao (阿林保), for instance, were both Manchu Bannermen with strong political connections at court. One explanation may be that Ruan Yuan was very sensitive about Liu Fenggao, whose first place on the General Examination he had usurped, although it was not his fault that the Qianlong Emperor had liked his essay better.

6. Imperial instructions to special envoys Zhou Zhaoji (周兆基) and Lu Yinpu (廬蔭浦) to investigate reports on Liu, and actions, if any, taken by Ruan Yuan. SYD/FB JQ 14/7/18 [1809/8/28]. Memorial from Tuojin (托津) (Manchu emissary sent by the Jiaqing Emperor to investigate this affair), Zhou and Lu reporting their findings, GZD-JQ015098 (JQ 14/8/12 [1809/9/21]).

7. GZD - JQ014647.

Appendix VI: Ruan Yuan as Director-General of Grain Transport

Ruan Yuan's tenure as Director-General of Grain Transport was less than two years. Therefore, this period can be viewed as an interlude in the context of his lifelong career in the provinces. He did not have time to establish any record; nor is there evidence that he made noteworthy contributions.

Ruan Yuan was recalled to Beijing in the aftermath of the Liu Fenggao affair in September 1809. By October 1810, there were signs that the emperor's ire was thawing. Ruan Yuan was appointed Imperial Diarist and a month later Chief Editor for the Draft Biographies of Scholars in the Historiography Office. Meanwhile, he was working on other projects as well. On the day after the Mid-Autumn Festival, 1812, a terse note in the *Veritable Records* showed that 'Ruan Yuan is appointed Director-General of Grain Transport to replace Xu Zhaochun (許兆春), who is recalled to the Board of Revenue.'¹ Ruan Yuan's own records provide more details by citing the imperial edict in full.

This year Xu Zhaochun came to give a report on the Tribute Grain Administration. When I saw him, I realized that he is not in total control of his faculties. Since he is almost seventy, and the responsibilities for Director-General of Grain Transport are heavy, involving tribute grain of eight provinces. Therefore, I appoint Ruan Yuan to replace Xu Zhaochun and move Xu to the Board of Revenue.²

In fact, the emperor could no longer ignore the fact that all was not well with the Grain Transport Administration. A censor had reported that among other problems, the canal boatmen had been extorting the Administration of between eighty and one hundred taels per boat. Since the censor did not give any specific name, the emperor ordered further investigations, by sending in a new director-general. This position was on the same level as a governor-general, so was higher than that of a provincial governor. He reported to the Board of

1. *Qing Shilu*, JQ260:13b.

2. *Diziji* 4:6a–b.

Revenue. Under the director-general were the 'provincial grain intendants, one for each tribute province, and each directly responsible to the director-general, not to the regular governor-general in whose province he served.'³

The staff of the Tribute Grain Administration was mostly a class of hereditary boatmen who lived in the military colonies along the Grand Canal. The grain boats were organized into fleets, and the boatmen more or less into gangs (Qing Bang 青幫). By the Jiaqing reign, the system was complicated, as was that of the administration of the Grand Canal. Many of the practices were not sanctioned by law.⁴ There is no information on what measures Ruan Yuan intended to take to correct the ills, but we have his proposals on how to improve matters, on how to measure and storage grain on the tribute boats, and on the issue of sea transport.⁵

Ruan Yuan was not totally unfamiliar with tribute grain. When he was Governor of Zhejiang, one of the provinces responsible for supplying the grain, his action had been considered important enough to be recorded in his official biography. In 1805, Ruan Yuan had sent 125,000 *shi* of tribute rice he bought to Tongzhou (通州), the northern terminus of the Grand Canal.⁶ Nor did concerns over grain storage ever leave his mind. In Guangdong and Guangxi, he reduced granary storage deficit accrued by previous administrations.⁷

Ruan Yuan reported one case involving deployment of armed guards when members of a heterodox sect were threatening the tribute boats, intending to rob the rice, perhaps. The date was 1805, the end of the White Lotus rebellion. In fact, the Director-General 'commanded a few thousand special troops who manned the seventy-odd first and second class transport stations (*wei* 衛 and *caobiao* 漕標 respectively) along the Grand Canal and its adjacent waterways'.⁸ Ruan Yuan assigned eight guards to each boat, and reported this action he took duly to the emperor.⁹ Since each boat normally carried ten to twelve hands, in fact the additional guards almost doubled the number of hands on the boat.¹⁰

In the middle of this case, Ruan Yuan was transferred to Jiangxi.

3. Jones and Kuhn, *CHOC* 10:1, p. 119.

4. See Li Wenzhi and Jiang Taixin, *Qingdai Caoyun* (1995), p. 337.

5. See Appendix IV.

6. *Biography of Ruan Yuan* in Historiography Office, no pagination.

7. See R. Bin Wong, 'Decline and Its Opposition 1781–1850', in *Nourish the People*, edited by Will and Wong (1991), p. 81, n. 12.

8. Harold C. Hinton, 'The Grain Tribute System of the Ch'ing Dynasty' (1952), p. 349.

9. *Diziji* 3:

10. Li Wenzhi, *Qingdai Caoyun* (1995), p. 213.

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Bibliography I: Archival Sources

The Qing archives are a unique source for historical research. Today, the extant archives, comprising nine million documents, are in the First Historical Archives in Beijing, the National Palace Museum and the Academia Sinica in Taipei. Unless otherwise noted, all of the documents used in this study are at the Museum.

Palace Memorials (Gong Zhong Dang 宮中檔, GZD)

In the Museum Collection of some 32,428 original memorials, about four hundred are from Ruan Yuan. Seven are from the Daoguang era, the rest from the Jiaqing reign: years 4–7 (1799–1802), 13–4 (1808–9), and 19–20 (1815–6). They constitute only a small percentage of Ruan Yuan’s correspondence with the throne. Fortunately, a number of the missing memorials can be found in *Qingdai Waijiao Shiliao* (清代外交史料) (Materials on foreign relations during the Qing dynasty), Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns. Additionally, Ruan Yuan had included memorials in his private records, *Yingzhou Bitan* (瀛舟筆談), *Yangcheng Bijì* (洋程筆記), and *Leitang Anzhu Diziji* (雷塘庵主弟子記) (see Appendix IV).

Catalogue numbers of Ruan Yuan’s Memorials are as follows:

The Jiaqing reign: GZD-JQ

001371	008300	009523	011168	012249	013127	014110	015038
002523	008375	009524	011169	012250	013128	014151	015039
003353	008380	009525	011170	012252	013129	014152	015040
004365	008381	009655	011171	012366	013130	014153	015041
004685	008382	009656	011232	012388	013145	014235	015117-1
004765	008383	009657	011271	012389	013326	014236	015118
004948	008460	009658	011272	012390	013127	014237	015119
005020	008461	009718	011273	012391	013128	014450	015166

005198	008462	009719	011332	012466	013129	014451	015167
005339	008566	009793	011333	012467	013130	014452	015168
005586	008567	009794	011347	012468	013145	014501	015173
005777	008741	009795	011500	012505	013326	014502	015319
005778	008742	009802	011510	012506	013327	014520	015320
006065	008743	009871	011527	012507	013328	014521	016205
006066	008744	009872	011534	012619	013329	014522	016259
007325	008946	009873	011535	012620	013330	014525	016260
007512	008947	009944	011536	012621	013331	014595	016380
007513	008948	010055	011537	012638	013433	014596	016381
007580	008949	010101	011597	012639	013434	014629	016382
007581	008950	010150	011598	012640	013566	014630	016557
007582	008956	010344	011731	012641	013567	014631	016558
007623	008957	010345	011744	012642	013568	014636	016669
007624	009154	010539	011795	012643	013569	014637	016670
007806	009155	010540	011796	012644	013570	014638	016720
007807	009156	010541	011802	012760	013528	014647	016721
007884	009157	010542	011803	012761	013629	014670	016722
007885	009265	010722	011946	012871	013630	014700	016831
007886	009266	010723	011947	012872	013631	014771	016838
007887	009267	010724	011995	012879	013764	014817	016839
007919	009340	010791	011996	012880	013765	014818	016923
008065	009341	010792	012070	012881	013778	014819	016924
008108	009342	010793	012089	012956	013920	014820	016925
008109	009346	011004	012090	012976	013921	014821	016926
008110	009486	011005	012091	012977	013922	014850	016927
008202	009487	011038	012145	012978	013923	014851	016991
008203	009500	011039	012147	013013	014097	015009-1	016991-1
008298	009521	011040	012247	013014	014098	015010	016992
008299	009522	011167	012248	013126	014099	015011	017069
017356	017819	018043	018297	018605	018921	019034	019411
017484	017820	018044	018298	018721	018922	019299	019515
017485	017821	018048	018299	018722	018926	019300	019516
017518	017846	018049	018446	018723	018986	019311	019517
017520	017849	018066	018447	018873	018987	019312	019638
017521	017851	018153	018448	018874	018988	019315	019639
017522	017875	018154	018449	018875	019000	019314	019640
017628	017876	018155	018450	018876	019008	019409	
017818	018042	018158	018604	018920	019033	019410	

The Daoguang reign: GZD-DG

000013 000049 000102 000131 000215 000222 000452

Grand Council Copies of Palace Memorials (Junjichu Zouche Lufu 軍機處奏冊錄副 JJLF)

Grand Council copies of memorials, all from the Daoguang reign, are as follows:

049434	049543	050632	050860	051514	056043	057187	057480
049435	049544	050633	051217	055471	056044	057188	
049436	049587	050634	051441	055472	056047	057189	
049437	049678	050636	051442	055473	056077	057190	
049438	049679	050851	051443	055727	056247	057191	
049540	049688	050857	051445	055728	056798	057192	
049541	049690	050858	051446	055729	056918	057478	
049542	050623	050859	051513	056042	056919	057479	

Grand Council Record Books

Records of the Grand Council are bound. The most useful for this study follow:

Documents Register (Suishou Dengji 隨手登記, SSDJ)

These were the daily working ledgers of documents submitted to and emanating from the emperor. The relevant Documents Register in the Museum collection comprises a complete set of the Jiaqing reign and the years 5 (1830), 13–15 (1843–5), and spring issue of year 25 (1850) of the Daoguang reign.

Imperial Edicts (Shangyu Dang 上諭檔, SYD)

These record books contain the emperor's edicts and rescripts as well as other types of imperial instructions in all categories: open and confidential, sent to officials through either the Grand Secretariat or the Grand Council, depending on the nature of the edict. The most useful for this research is the Shangyu Dang Fangben (方本 SYD/FB), comprising imperial instructions sent through open transmission. The Museum Collection of the relevant period of this research is fairly complete.

Deliberation Memorials (Yifu Zouce 議覆奏冊, YFZC)

After the emperor read a memorial, sometimes he sent it to a group of high officials at court, to see if the facts were clear and the laws had been correctly applied, and to consider a recommendation to the emperor as to what further action to take. Extant are half a dozen deliberation memorials with Ruan Yuan's name as Grand Secretary or as President of the Board of War.

Court Letters (Jixindang 寄信檔, JXD, after JQ 11 Tingjidang 廷寄檔, TJD)

These contain Grand Council records of the rough drafts of the important edicts and rescripts dictated by the emperor to the grand councilors, with corrections in red ink made by the emperor right on the documents. These documents are like notebooks, with the essential messages complete but not all in the official terminology. The Museum Collection includes all of the court letters of the Jiaqing reign (except winter, 1798), and all the years of the Daoguang reign (although some years incomplete) relevant to research on Ruan Yuan.

Record Book of Palace Memorials sent to the Outer Court (Waijidang 外記檔, WJD)

Copies of all memorials sent by the Grand Council to the Outer Court were bound into books. The copies were written hurriedly on inferior quality paper. They are, however, excellent as supplements to documents which were missing. The most useful of these extant are copies of Ruan Yuan's memorials on the Terranova case and the fire at the foreign factories in Canton, 1821–2.

Records of Imperial Audiences (Yinjindang 引進檔 YJD)

Very little of this archive remains at the First Historical Archives. Among the extant are two of interest to Ruan Yuan research: a record of the Daoguang Emperor receiving a son of Ruan Yuan, and on a later page, the Xianfeng Emperor receiving a grandson.

Historiography Office Records (Guoshih Guan dangan 國史館檔案)

In the Historiography Office are five drafts of a chronological biography of Ruan Yuan. In addition, there is a copy of *Ruan Yuan liezhuan* (阮元列傳) [Biography of Ruan Yuan], in the collection of the Biographies of High Officials of the Dynasty [Guoshiguan Dachen Zhuan] (國史館大臣傳), Supplement, *juan* 3.

For an analysis on the usefulness of the archival documents to this research, please see my essay, 'The Value and Limitations of the Palace Archives for Biographical Research: The Case of Juan Yuan 1764–1849', in *Proceedings of International Ch'ing Archives Symposium*, edited by Chen Chieh-hsien, pp. 311–23. Taipei, 2–6 July 1978.

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Glossary

Agui 阿桂
Alinbao 阿林保
Anlan 安瀾

Bagua jiao 八卦教
Bai Juyi 白居易
Bailing 百齡
baiguo 白果
Bailian jiao 白蓮教
baishou 拜壽
Bao Shichen 包世臣
Baoding 保定
baojia 保甲
Baoshan 保山
Baoying 寶應
Beihu 北湖
Bi Yuan 畢沅
Bianqian hui 邊錢會

cai 才
Cai Qian 蔡牽
Cao Zhenyong 曹振鏞
ce shi 側室
cezi 測字
Chang Li 昌黎
Changling 長齡
Changzhou 常州
chaozhu 朝珠

Chen Li 陳澧
chen 臣
Cheng Qingwang Yongxing 成親王永
瑋

Chengde 成德
Chongwen 崇文
Chongyi 崇義
Chuzhou 處州
Chuzhou 衢州
citang 祠堂

dachuan 大船
Daduan pao 大緞袍
Dahu Shan 大虎山
Dai Quheng 戴衢亨
Daming Hu 大明湖
datang 大堂
de 德
Deng Tingzhen 鄧廷楨
dian 殿
dingming 頂名
Dong Gao 董誥
dong 動
dongji 冬祭
Dongxiang 東鄉

E'ertai 鄂爾泰
enren 恩人

Fan Qin 范勤

Fang Hao 方豪

Fang Litang 方笠堂

Four Books 四書

foxiang 佛像

Fu gongsheng 附貢生

fu 福

Fuchen 輔臣

fujiansheng 附監生

fushou rizeng 福壽日增

Fushou Ting 福壽庭

gaitu guiliu 改土歸流

Ganzeng chuan 趕繒船

Ganzhou 贛州

gao 高

gaomi 高密

Ge 閣

Gongdao Qiao 公道橋

gongfei 公費

gongshou 拱手

Guangling 廣陵

guanglu dafu 光祿大夫

guanli 管理

Guanyang 灌陽

Guanyin 觀音

Guozi jian 國子監

guqin 古琴

haichao 海潮

Haining 海寧

Hangzhou 杭州

hao 號

He Taiqing 何泰清

Heshen 和珅

Hong Liangji 洪亮吉

Hong Qiao 虹橋

hongchuan 紅船

Hoshitai 和世泰

Hu Men 虎門

Hu Shi 胡適

Hu Wenkai 胡文楷

Huai'an 淮安

Huai-Yang 淮揚

Huang Aiping 黃愛平

Huayuan Xiang 花園巷

hui 會

jiamiao 家廟

Jiang Xuanbi 蔣宣鉞

Jiangchou pao 江綢袍

Jiangdu 江都

jiao 教

Jiaoshan 焦山

Jiaxing 嘉興

Jiazhang 甲長

Jigu Zhai 積古齋

Jiluo (Gioro) Jiqing 吉羅吉慶

Jin Nong 金農

Jinan 濟南

jing 靜

Jingxian Yuan 靜香園

Jinhua 金華

Jinxian 進賢

Jiqing 吉慶

jiusheng fengjiang 九省封疆

juanna 捐納

junxiu 俊秀

junxue jiaoshou guan 郡學教授官

kaimen jianxi 開門見喜

Kong Decheng 孔德成

Kong Luhua 謂韜朋

Kong Qingrong 孔慶鎔

Kong Xianpei 孔憲培

Kuilun 魁倫

Kunming 昆明

Kunning Gong 坤寧宮

kunqu 崑曲

langzhong 郎中
Leitang 雷塘
Leitang Anzhu 雷塘庵主
Li Changeng 李長庚
Li Daonan 李道南
Li Dou 李斗
Liang Qichao 梁啟超
Liang Zhangju 梁章距
liangjia 糧價
Lienü zhuan 列女傳
Lin Daiyu 林黛玉
Lin Qing 林清
Lin Qingzhang 林慶彰
Lin Zexu 林則徐
Lingyin Shi 靈隱寺
lishu 隸書
Lisu 傈僳
Liu Duanlin 劉端臨
Liu Fenggao 劉鳳誥
Liu Huanzhi 劉鑾之
Liu Wenru 劉文如
Liu Yong 劉墉
liuyang ju 留養局
lixue 理學
longwen pingpiao 龍文憑票
lou 樓
Lu Kun 盧坤
Lu 魯
Luan Yuan 亂園
Luming yan 鹿鳴宴
Lun Guili 倫貴利
lunsu jincheng 輪宿禁城
Luoluo 獬獬 (獬獬)
luwei 蘆葦
Luxi 廬溪

Ma Chaozhu 馬朝祖
Ma Yueguan 馬月貫
mangpao 蟒袍
Mao Chang 毛昌

Meihua Shuyuan 梅花書院
meiren 媒人
mengchong zhanchuan 蒙衝戰船
Miao 苗
mizou 密奏
mohe 墨盒
moshuijia 墨水匣
mulu 墓廬
muyou 幕友
mu 畝

Nan Shu Fang 南書房
Nanjing 南京
Nanyang 南洋
Naxi 納西
Nayancheng 那彥成
niaoqiang 鳥槍
Ningbo 寧波
Nong Wenyun 農文雲
nong 農
Nujiang 怒江

pai 牌
Pan Shi'en 潘世恩
paotai 砲台
Peng Chunnong 彭春農
Penglai Xiandao 蓬萊仙島
pingdiao 平糶
pingliang 平涼
pinmin 貧民
Pu'er 普洱
Puji Tang 普濟堂
Pukou 浦口

Qi Xian 祁縣
qi 妻
Qi 齊
qian 錢
Qian Kai 錢楷
Qian Meixi 錢梅溪

Qian Ziwen 千字文

Qianfu Shan 千佛山

Qianlong 乾隆

Qianmen 前門

Qiantang Jiang 錢塘江

qie 妾

Qigaihui 乞丐會

Qin Ying 秦瀛

Qing Ming 清明

qing 卿

Qing'antai 清安泰

qingguan 清官

Qinggui 慶桂

Qingshi gao, bingji 清史稿兵記

Qingshigao Shuguo Zhuan 清史稿屬國傳

Qingtian 青田

Qiu Lianggong 邱良功

qizhang 旂長

Qufu 曲阜

Raozhou 饒州

Rong Yuan 容園

Ruan An 阮安

Ruan Changsheng 阮常生

Ruan Chengxin 阮承信

Ruan Chengyi 阮成義

Ruan Enluan 阮恩灝

Ruan Fu 阮福

Ruan Heng 阮亨

Ruan Hu 阮祐

Ruan Konghou 阮孔厚

Ruan Kuisheng 阮葵生

Ruan Quan 阮荃

Ruan Xixiang 阮錫庠

Ruan Yanxi 阮衍喜

Ruan Yuan 阮元

Ruan Yutang 阮玉堂

Ruan Zheng 阮正

Ruyi 如意

San Zijing 三字經

Sanchao neige 三朝內閣

Sandianhui 三點會

Sang 喪

Sanku 三庫

shachuan 沙船

Shang Shufang 上書房

Shanxi 山西

shaochuan 哨船

Shaoxing 紹興

Shenfang 神風

Sheng Sui 盛歲

Shi 鯽

Shilu guan 實錄館

Shixiang 十巷

Shixue 實學

Shoukang Gong 壽康宮

Shoumei 壽眉

Shu 贖

Shucang 書藏

Shunde 順德

Shuntian Fuyin 順天府尹

shuyuan 書院

Siku Quanshu 四庫全書

Su Dongpo 蘇東坡

Sui Yangdi 隋煬帝

sui 歲

Tai 俸

Taifu 太傅

Taishan Shengmu 泰山聖母

Taiyuan Fu 太原府

Taizhou 台州

Taizi shaobao 太子少保

Taizi Taibao 太子太保

Taizi Taifu 太子太傅

Tang Jingzhao 湯金釧

Tang Qingyun 唐慶雲

Tang Zhijun 湯志鈞

Tengyue 騰越

Tiandihui 天地會

Tiandihui 添弟會

Tianmu 天母

Tianyige 天一閣

Tiaoshen 跳神

Tidu 提督

tingchuan 艇船

Tiren Ge 體仁閣

Tongan 同安

Tongchuan 潼川

tongpao 銅砲

tongzhi 同知

Tongzhou 通州

tuanlian 團練

tuanlian xiangyong 團練鄉勇

Tuojin 托津

tusi 土司

wa 瓦

wan 萬

Wan Tixi 萬提喜

Wang Delu 王德祿

Wang Junyi 王俊義

Wang Yigong 王以功

Wang Zhenzhong 王振忠

Wang Zhiyi 汪志伊

Wanliu Tang 萬柳堂

wanmi 晚米

Wei Minghua 委明鏹

Wei Hsioh-ren (Wei Xueren) 魏學仁

Wei Peh T'i (Betty Wei) 魏白蒂

Wei Qingyuan 韋慶遠

Wei Yuan 魏源

Weiwan Bican 委宛筆藏

Wen Ning 文寧

Wenchu Daotai 溫處道臺

Wenxuan lou 文選樓

Wenzhou 溫州

Wu Kangcheng 吳康成

Wu Lanxiu 吳蘭修

Wulao hui 五老會

Wutong 梧桐

Wuxi 無錫

Wuying Dian 武英殿

xi 喜

xi 細

Xiamen 廈門

Xian 縣

xianmi 仙米

xianpai 銜牌

Xianza ren 閑雜人

Xiao Canglang Ting 小滄浪亭

Xiaohe 孝和

Xiaolian fangzheng 孝廉方正

Xiaomao 小貓

Xiaoshen 孝慎

Xie Xue 謝雪

Xie Yong 謝鏞

Xihetu 喜禾圖

Xihua Men 西華門

Xiong Chi 熊曄

Xishu 西塾

Xu Guangqi 徐光啟

Xu Naiji 許乃濟

Xu Yanjing 許延德

Xu Zongyan 許宗彥

Xue 雪

Xuehaitang 學海堂

Xueshou Zhai 學壽齋

xuezheng 學政

xun 訓

Yanfeng 延豐

Yang Ke 楊科

yang lian 養廉

Yang Liangsheng 楊聯陞

Yang Yilong 楊易龍

yangji yuan 養濟院

Yangzhou 揚州

Yangzhou Baguai 揚州八怪

Yangzhou Huafang Lu 揚州畫舫錄

Yangzhou Xuepai 揚州學派

Yanzhou 嚴州

Yao 搖

Yi Jing 奕經

Yi Yuan 宜園

Yichang 宜昌

yijin huanxiang 衣錦還鄉

yin 蔭

Yin Bingshou 尹秉壽

Yin Qiao 影橋

Yipin furen 一品夫人

yixing Yanling 頤性延齡

Yizheng 儀徵

yong 勇

Yongle Dadian 永樂大典

yongyan 顥琰

yu 雨

Yuan Binzhi 袁秉直

Yuan San 袁三

Yude 玉德

Yuenan 越南

Yuxiu Shan 粵秀山

Yugan 餘幹

Yunping 永平

Zhaifei 齋匪

Zhang Heng 張衡

Zhang Tingji 張廷濟

Zhang Xi 張熙

Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠

Zhang Yuan 張園

Zhang Zhidong 張之洞

Zhangzhou 漳州

Zhao Yi 趙翼

Zhaolian 昭槤

Zhaoqing 肇慶

Zhenhai Wang 鎮海王

Zheng Banqiao 鄭板橋

Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功

Zhenjiang 鎮江

Zhenyuan Fu 鎮遠府

Zhonghe Dian 中和殿

Zhongtang 中堂

Zhu Gui 朱珪

Zhu Jian 朱珩

Zhu Maoli 朱毛俚

Zhu Xigeng 朱錫庚

Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋

Zhu Yun 朱筠

Zhuan 磚

Zhuang Jifa 莊吉發

Zhuhu Caotang 珠瑚草堂

Zhushi 主事

zi 字

Zijin Cheng 紫禁城

Ziyang 紫陽

zuci 族祠

zuijing 最精

zuitong 最通

zuizhuan 最專



Exterior wall of the Ruan family shrine on Wen Xuan Lane (courtesy of Gennie Lee, 1988)



Master Ruan's Island, West Lake, Hangzhou (courtesy of Mark Thomson, 1976)



Portrait of Ruan Yuan at fifty-six (Source: Qingdai Xuezhe Xiangzhuan 清代學者象傳)

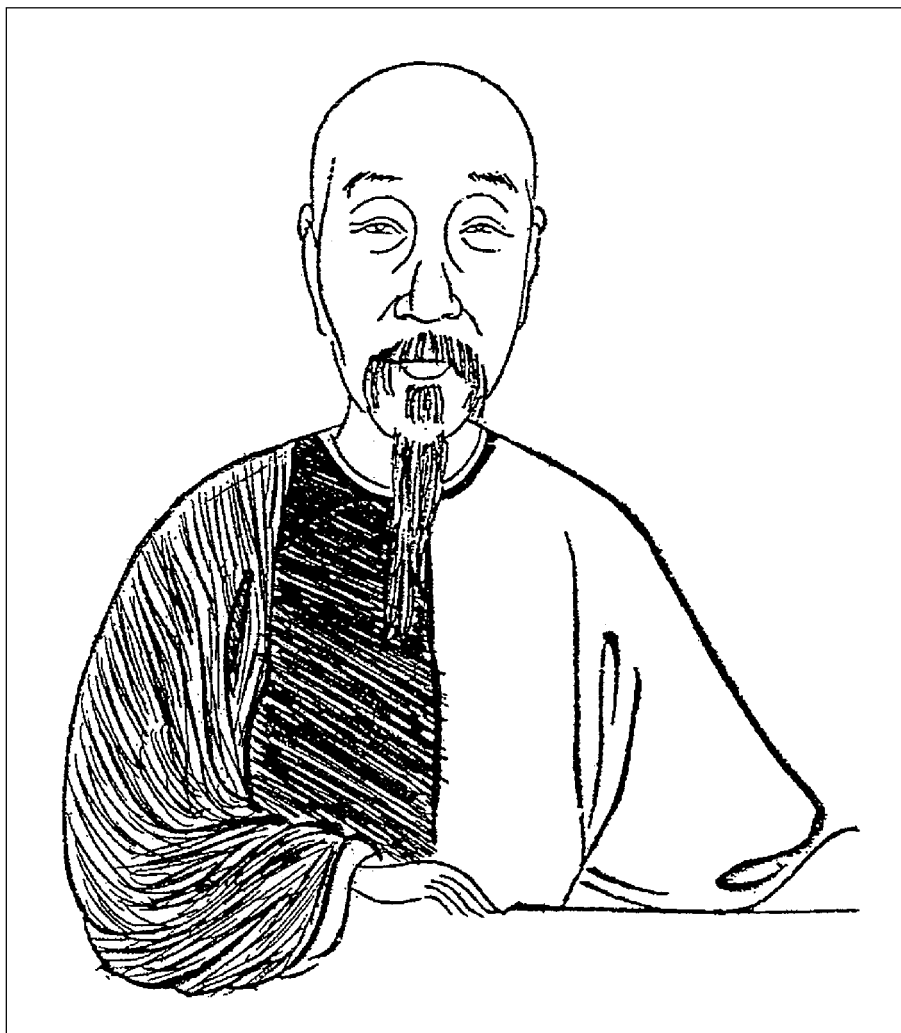


The Canton Fire, 1822, artist unknown (courtesy of Martyn Gregory of London)

A page of Ruan Yuan family letter at the National Library, Beijing (reprinted by permission of the National Library)



Shan Shi Pan (reprinted by permission of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan)



Portrait of Ruan Yuan at eighty from Vissière in *T'oung Pao* (1904)